

**STATE OF SIEGE: THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SECURITY STATE IN  
EGYPT DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR**

By

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES .....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS .....</b>	<b>vii</b>
<b>LIST OF EGYPTIAN UNITS, MEASUREMENTS AND MILITARY RANKS....</b>	<b>viii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>ix</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Chapter I The Crisis Years .....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Chapter II The State of Siege.....</b>	<b>73</b>
<b>Chapter III Boundaries .....</b>	<b>122</b>
<b>Chapter IV Empire of the Granary .....</b>	<b>169</b>
<b>Chapter V An Unpaid Debt .....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>Chapter VI Internees, Draftees, Refugees .....</b>	<b>272</b>
<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>311</b>
<b>Appendix.....</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY .....</b>	<b>332</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1. Mustafa al-Nahhas and King Faruq.....	44
Figure 1.2. The British political and military leadership in Cairo, August 3, 1942 .....	49
Figure 1.3. Police work became more complex.....	57
Figure 1.4. Poverty and privilege in <i>Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya</i> .....	68
Figure 2.1. A royalist take on the war and its protagonists: ‘Ali Maher and Mustafa al-Nahhas in <i>Ruz al-Dunya</i> cartoons.....	81
Figure 2.2. Institutional schizophrenia under the state of siege: cartoons.....	115
Figure 2.3. Military Court Parquet Misdemeanor Reports to the Military Governor.....	121
Figure 3.1. British Troops in Egypt (BTE) garrison force levels, 1939-1948 .....	129
Figure 3.2. Security operations at No. 5 Base Ordnance Depot, Al-Tal Al-Kabir, July 16, 1943.....	142
Figure 3.3. Egyptian and British soldiers in Cairo.....	146
Figure 3.4. Air raids and shelters in urban Egypt .....	159
Figure 3.5. Map: the British military infrastructure of Lower Egypt as of 1943.....	168
Figure 4.1: Map northern Nile Delta villages that petitioned against government assessments for mandatory wheat purchases in April 1942.....	191
Figure 4.2. Egyptian dockworkers unload emergency British consignments of wheat..	191
Figure 4.3. "[What] We Want for the Peasant!" .....	205
Figure 4.4. A vulgar villain: the war profiteer trope: cartoons .....	217
Figure 4.5. Corporal Punishment for Black Marketeering: cartoon .....	218
Figure 5.1. Egyptian workers in British military workshops.....	235
Figure 5.2. Egyptian civilians employed in British military units or workshops, 1940-1946.....	237
Figure 5.3. Inflation in the media: cartoon .....	241
Figure 5.4. The travail of the effendi salaryman: cartoon.....	251
Figure 6.1. Prisoner of War and Internment Camps at Fayid, 1943 .....	284
Figure C.1. Dedication plaque at the El Alamein War Museum .....	322

## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

FO: Foreign Office, UK National Archives, London

WO: War Office, UK National Archives, London

T: Treasury Office, UK National Archives, London

CO: Colonial Office, UK National Archives, London

DWQ: Dār Wathā'iq al-Qawmiyya (Egyptian National Archives), Cairo

NARA: United States National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD

IWM: Imperial War Museum, London

MESC: Middle East Supply Center

MEF: Middle East Forces

BTE: British Troops in Egypt

## **LIST OF EGYPTIAN UNITS, MEASUREMENTS AND MILITARY RANKS**

1000 millemes = 100 piastres = 1 Egyptian Pound (LE)

97.5 piastres = 1 British Pound Sterling (£, pegged until 1947)

1 feddan = 1.04 acre

1 ardeb = 150 kg of wheat or 140 kg of maize

1 qintar = 45 kg (cotton or sugar)

Mulazim: Lieutenant

Yuzbashī: Captain

Sagh: Major

Bikbashī: Lieutenant Colonel

Qa'imqam: Colonel

Miralai: Brigadier

## ABSTRACT

This work examines the Egyptian experience of World War II, the development of an Egyptian-run constitutional state of emergency in response to economic and social crises during the war, and their effect on postwar support among diverse political groups for an active and even authoritarian state. This constitutional framework, based on French *état de siège* laws of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, became a routine institution after 1945. Egyptian Cabinet papers illustrate the process through which the Prime Minister's office created state of siege legislation. These new laws and policies granted the Egyptian state strong police powers to imprison spies, saboteurs, and protesters without charges, along with those accused of stealing from the British army. The state of siege also included broad powers to regulate labor, to nationalize and subsidize the trade in wheat and bread and to suppress the resulting black market. The dissertation argues that this legal framework anchored new modes of surveillance and social scientific knowledge to material practices and institutions that provided continuity in crisis. These institutions were particularly important in the diplomatic colonialism of the British military occupation. They enforced legal jurisdictions and spacial zones and boundaries that microsocial interactions were always in the process of breaking down. I emphasize both inertia and change in relations of power through dynamic institutions: such as the police, food supply bureaucracy, labor unions and their surveillance, public finance and customs and nationality regimes. Focusing on the intellectual and bureaucratic underpinnings of these institutions helps



explains events conventionally understood through social and political discontinuities: British decolonization and the creation of the postcolonial Egyptian state. This analysis is the first to establish the early genealogy of the legislation, bureaucratic practices, and public discourses that institutionalized and legitimated a new form of authoritarian rule and legality in Egypt, which continued in the 1958 Emergency Law and military trials for civilian crimes in the present day.

## Introduction

In August 1947, Egyptian Prime Minister Mahmoud Fahmi Al-Nuqrashi traveled to Lake Success, New York, to ask the United Nations Security Council to pass a resolution calling for an end to the British military occupation of the Suez Canal. Despite his slight odds of success, Al-Nuqrashi took advantage of this rare opportunity for an Egyptian politician to challenge the British occupation before so many world leaders. Al-Nuqrashi asserted that the UN should void the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance, the only bilateral agreement legitimating Britain's 65-year occupation, in three caustic exchanges with Britain's first UN Ambassador Alexander Cadogan.<sup>1</sup> The Second World War, the crisis this treaty had been designed to address, had ended. Then why, he asked, was Britain maintaining a garrison in Egypt many times greater than the 10,000 men allowed in the treaty? It was a question of fundamental consequence to the system of sovereign nation-states the UN was trying to establish.

The Egyptian government made a great deal of its fidelity to this treaty before the meeting, publicizing the many ways the Egyptian state had aided the Allied effort in the war. The Egyptian Council of Ministers had prepared a comprehensive essay on the subject in a pamphlet in Arabic and English published that year titled *The Contribution of Egypt in World War II*, which it circulated among UN diplomats and the Arabic and

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<sup>1</sup> Official Records of the UN Security Council, second year, 175th, 176th, 179th and 182nd meetings, 5, 11 and 13 August 1947. Cadogan had served as Permanent Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs from 1938 to 1946.

foreign-language press.<sup>2</sup> This pamphlet compiled reports of more than a dozen ministries and government agencies, a project Wafd party leader Mustafa al-Nahhas launched in April 1944 when he was Prime Minister.<sup>3</sup> It enumerated every thinkable form of support Egypt gave the British, broadly categorized under “political, military, economic and financial” services, starting in September 1939, a year before the war threatened Egyptian territory.

The Egyptian government shaped its participation in the war with the state of siege, a state of emergency legislated in the 1923 constitution.<sup>4</sup> The state of siege allowed the Egyptian Prime Minister to take a wide variety of extralegal security measures. These included interning potential spies, saboteurs, and political dissidents of any nationality without trial; procuring land and local labor for the Allied militaries; nationalizing the planning and trade of agricultural commodities to increase food production, and effectively advancing hundreds of millions of pounds sterling in credit to the British. The pamphlet asserted more specifically that Egypt’s breaking of diplomatic ties with Germany in 1939, Italy in 1940 and all other Axis countries, in the context of these services, represented a *de facto* declaration of war. In fact, Egypt had remained neutral until February 1945. “[Egypt] would have acted in the same manner if there had been no

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<sup>2</sup> Egypt President of the Council of Ministers, *Khidmāt Miṣr Lil-Ḥulafa’ Ithna’ Al-Ḥarb Al-‘Ālamiya Al-Thāniya* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba‘at Al-Amīriya, 1947).

<sup>3</sup> DWQ 0069-007383, a bound folder titled “Assistance given to Great Britain by Egypt for the Purpose of Winning the War.” Emad Ahmed Helal, “Egypt’s Overlooked Contribution to World War II,” in *The World in World Wars: Experiences, Perceptions and Perspectives From Africa and Asia*, eds. Heike Liebau, Katrin Bromber, Katherina Lange, Dyala Hamza and Ravi Ahuja (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 215-250, examines these documents in depth.

<sup>4</sup> The 1923 constitution was based on the Belgian constitutional monarchy and drew on French civil law concepts, including *l’état de siège*. The Arabic translation *al-aḥkām al-‘urfīyya* is more ambiguous, and had been used also for British “martial law” in the First World War. All Egyptian legislation and proclamations were officially published in the government gazette both in French and Arabic until the 1950s.

treaty,” Al-Nuqrashi added at the Security Council. “It did, in fact, act in the same manner in co-operating with the United States and others of the allies.”<sup>5</sup>

Targeted both at the global public and the members of the Security Council, the Egyptian government designed this pamphlet to demonstrate Egypt’s loyalty to the Allied cause, which in 1947 still equated directly with legitimate membership in the United Nations. However, there was another aspect to the Egyptian retelling of wartime history that had less to do with Egypt’s behavior towards the Allies than with the nature and presentation of the Egyptian state itself. If the international community still considered Egypt an unofficial protectorate of Britain because of the weakness of its own public, infrastructural, military, financial or social security, Al-Nuqrashi implied, then the British occupation would continue in order to support regional stability. But if Egypt could demonstrate that the British occupation was not only unjust, but it competed dangerously with Egypt’s own sovereign state power and was therefore *threatening* regional security, the Security Council would be justified in withdrawing its support for the British.

Al-Nuqrashi acknowledged international law supported the Treaty’s continued existence, but he proposed the Security Council override the law in the interest of regional stability. Al-Nuqrashi portrayed Egypt as one of the strongest of the world’s “small and medium powers,” which, while too weak to force Britain out by itself, was the only source of authentic and liberal-democratic leadership in the Arab world that could guarantee stability in a new global system of equally sovereign nation-states. As much as it had supported an anti-imperial worldview during the war, the United States was not prepared to disrupt Britain’s status-quo hegemony in the region with Soviet power

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<sup>5</sup> Official Records of the UN Security Council, second year, 176th meeting, 11 August 1947, 1865.

looming to the north. Ultimately, the United States did not support the measure or any alternatives and the issue was shelved.

Al-Nuqrashi's failure to win the United Nations' support for British evacuation transformed Egyptian politics. The nationalist historiography of Egypt has linked the public's disillusionment with a diplomatic solution to the British occupation after 1947 to its populist rejection of the political elite's domination of the Egyptian economy throughout the British colonial era. In this narrative of crisis, the impasse in negotiations led to an increase of extreme nationalist protest and terrorism, including the further radicalization of the Muslim Brotherhood.

As a result of this definitive break between the Egyptian national movement and the diplomatic engagement with British power that had characterized the interwar period, both foreign and Egyptian histories have come to depict Egypt and Egyptians as passive observers of the Second World War. Although it failed to produce political results, Al-Nuqrashi's presentation of the mobilization of the Egyptian state in the war reveals much about the forgotten aspirations of late colonial Egypt. No Egyptian politician in 1939 could have delivered Al-Nuqrashi's speech with the language and confidence he did. It provides evidence of continuous growth in the Egyptian state, and it refutes narratives that crisis and revolution established a stark difference between state activities in the monarchy and republican 'Abd al-Nasir Era.

This work therefore presents two interlocking arguments about the effect of the war on Egypt. The material consequences of war tell a social history of dislocation, trauma and opportunism both for individuals and for the institutions of government. This focus alone resurrects the historical agency of Egyptians in this period. At the same time,

the restructuring of Egyptian society and the state had effects on private enterprise, law and nationalism that persisted beyond the 1940s.

First, the war affected the life of every Egyptian, contrary to imperial narratives implying Egypt's passivity. Direct attacks, the Allied occupation and other circumstances of war obliged the institutions of the Egyptian state to play an active role in the conflict. Its involvement caused wrenching growth in the state and a vast change in the relationship between the state and its subjects. The external military threat and internal disorder of British occupation transformed security and surveillance in the Egyptian state from a rural, privatized and decentralized set of practices to an urban, public and centralized one aiming towards total control of Egyptian sovereign space. Hand-in-hand with this trend, the crisis of war activated many of the étatist and welfare programs proposed before the war, but it also forced Egyptian officials to innovate policies to regulate social behavior, labor and consumption.

Second, the experience of war established the legal forms and political culture that regulated and legitimated these changes in the state. The war was the first international crisis in which Egypt acted as a legally sovereign state. The government used the state of siege as an effective mechanism that protected this legal fiction and allowed the smooth adaptation of Egyptian policy to British war aims. At the same time, the state of siege's foundation in French constitutional law preserved the existence of the civil legislature and liberal legality more broadly. It instituted a unique route for state interventionism in Egypt by creating a two-track parallel legal system. On one side, the liberal constitutional government, legislature and a civilian judiciary continued to operate as normal. On the other, an increasing number of cases fell under the jurisdiction of a

prime minister emboldened as military governor, writing a code of fiat law adjudicated by a military judiciary. In the process of saving the liberal state, Egypt would risk institutional schizophrenia.

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE EGYPTIANS IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR?

Egyptian official postcolonial historical narratives depict the 1940s as a decade of political corruption, colonial collaboration and state failure leading inevitably towards revolution. Their incongruous depictions of the virulence of the British occupation in the 1940s and of the novelty of social welfare and state economic interventions as security policies in the 1950s demand a closer interrogation. The construction of this epochal divide served postcolonial political ideology in Egypt. After 1952, Gamal 'Abdel Nasser and the Free Officers understood almost immediately the importance of shaping a popular historical narrative to portray their new coup and social policies as constituting a social revolution.<sup>6</sup> The officers first co-opted respected academic historians like 'Abd al-Rahman al-Rafi'i to diminish the importance of the Albanian Muhammad 'Ali dynasty in historical narratives in favor of the autochthonous struggle of the Egyptian people. In the last volume of al-Rafi'i's 1950s textbook series for the public school curriculum, *The Struggle of Egypt in the Modern Era*, he condenses the major events of the reigns of Kings Fu'ad and Faruq from the 1923 constitution until 1951 into the first third of the book, and spends the final two thirds on the 1951 abrogation crisis through the 1952 coup, explaining why the prior events led inexorably to the present regime.<sup>7</sup> He presents

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<sup>6</sup> Yoav Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past: Historians and History Writing in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); Anthony P. Gorman, *Historians, State and Politics in Twentieth Century Egypt: Contesting the Nation*. (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman Al-Rāfi'ī, *Miṣr Al-Mujāhida Fi-L- 'Aṣr Al-Ḥadith.*, Vol. 6 (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥilāl, 1957).

the events he chose to include in easy-to-comprehend bullet paragraphs outlining the dynamic of the struggle between a weak Parliament, overweening king and imperious British residency. Al-Rafi'i depicts the Second World War in the three or four coercive interventions the British made in Egyptian government.

By the late 1950s, the Free Officers began to produce their own memoirs, and to promote them as primary sources of the highest authenticity for Egypt's modern history. In newspaper op-eds, pamphlets and books, the young Free Officers explained the revolution through the experiences, ideas and decisions of their coming of age as junior officers in the 1940s. Gamal Abdel Nasser dwelled poetically on his nationalist feelings of shame as a young officer when the British replaced the Egyptian military at the Libyan frontier in September 1940.<sup>8</sup> Anwar al-Sadat contributed a much more comprehensive story of the Free Officer movement in *Secrets of the Revolution*, published in 1957. He portrays the movement as a wide conspiracy dating to 1939 that supported treasonous wartime projects he mostly committed solo.<sup>9</sup> Later memoirs by Abdel Latif al-Baghdadi and Karim Mohi al-Din have mostly reinforced Abdel Nasser's and Sadat's portrayals of the 1940s from the perspective of young officers, extending their immobility and

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<sup>8</sup> Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir, *Egypt's Liberation: The Philosophy of the Revolution* (Washington DC: Public Affairs Press, 1955).

<sup>9</sup> Anwar Al-Sadat, *Asrār Al-Thawrah Al-Miṣriyya* (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Hilāl, 1957). Such as assisting German spy Hans Eppler in 1942, for which he was temporarily imprisoned. He fails to mention his role in the assassination of Wafd Finance Minister Amin Osman. Although young officer political activity had been on the rise since the expansion of the military academy admissions to middle class young men in 1936, the Free Officers did not in fact become organized until 1949. See Charles Tripp, "Ali Maher and the Politics of the Egyptian Army, 1936-1942," in *Contemporary Egypt: Through Egyptian Eyes: Essays in Honour of Professor P.J. Vatikiotis*, ed. Charles Tripp (London; New York: Routledge, 1993); Tewfik Aclimandos, "Revisiting the History of the Egyptian Army," in *Re-Envisioning Egypt, 1919-1952*, eds. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson and Barak A. Salmoni (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005) contains a concise and accurate history of army politics in the 1940s.



dejection metaphorically into stagnation of the Egyptian nation.<sup>10</sup> This foundation of authentic historical narratives for postcolonial Egypt casts its protagonists as dissatisfied young men within a branch of the government who broke with it and forged ahead with radically new social and economic policies. It delegitimizes narratives that the Free Officers actually relied heavily on the old bureaucracy for its ideas and implementation.<sup>11</sup>

Eyewitnesses wrote the first foreign-language histories of wartime Egypt in the three decades afterwards. While they were less beholden to a revolutionary nationalist perspective, their approaches to the narrative tended to be idiosyncratic. In 1952, George Kirk, a British historian who had worked in military intelligence in Cairo, published a well researched and far more comprehensive account of political events in Egypt and the Middle East during the war that has become one of the few standards of the genre. Although it is structured as an objective narrative, Kirk betrays a perspective based on both his personal experience and as a British intellectual in the mid-1950s; he laments the end of empire and highlights episodes of political contention between the British and Egyptian governments as “bids for independence.” His orientalist evaluation of the average Egyptian’s engagement with the war denies any room for his or her agency. At the height of the Axis threat in 1942, he writes, “Egypt’s ‘have not’ population maintained throughout an impassive calm... it was... the stoic indifference of a people accustomed through the ages to letting waves of conquest roll over their bent backs...”<sup>12</sup>

Yet, the background of Kirk’s account is filled with the threats of bread riots, industrial

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<sup>10</sup> ‘Abd al-Laṭīf Baghdādī, *Mudhakkirāt ‘Abd Al-Laṭīf Al-Baghdād* (al-Qāhirah: al-Maktab al-Miṣrī al-Ḥadīth, 1977), 11-13. al-Dīn Muḥyī, Khālīd, *Memories of a Revolution: Egypt, 1952* (Cairo, Egypt: American University in Cairo Press, 1995) 14-15, published in Arabic in 1984.

<sup>11</sup> Recovered in Joel Gordon, *Nasser’s Blessed Movement: Egypt’s Free Officers and the July Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) and Roel Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity: Secular Liberal and Left-Wing Political Thought in Egypt, 1945-1958* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2002).

<sup>12</sup> George Kirk, *The Middle East in the War* (Oxford, London: Oxford University Press, 1952), cited in a long block from the Christian Science Monitor correspondent, 220.

and service strikes and other lower class actions that seem to pass as natural forces only somewhat connected to elite politics and economic policies. Memoirs of other intelligence operatives and a published selection of British Ambassador Sir Miles Lampson Lord Killearn's detailed diaries are valuable primary sources of Britain's weakening colonial grip in the period that, in a dearth of academic research, passed for authoritative history in the '60s and '70s.<sup>13</sup>

The postcolonial Egyptian regime's monopolistic control over state archives has made it difficult for private Egyptian or foreign historians to produce complete competing narratives that emphasize bureaucratic action or political economic policy. Unlike the Muhammad Ali dynasty's 'Abdin historiographic project of the 1920s to compile state papers up to the British occupation in 1882 and to encourage academic interpretation of these papers as the only authoritative version of history about the dynasty, the republican regime has chosen mostly to make government documents after 1952 unavailable to historians. Documentation from the period 1882 to 1952 remains fragmented and poorly organized as a result of decades of changing, uncoordinated and incomplete preservation projects across the different ministries.<sup>14</sup> Both Egyptian and foreign archival researchers have concentrated their efforts on 19<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian history, while political scientists and sociologists have dominated the interpretation of contemporary Egypt after the consolidation of area studies in the 1950s. Moreover, Egyptian historians of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have relied inordinately on British government documents, which

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<sup>13</sup> Alfred William Sansom, *I Spied Spies* (London: G. G. Harrap, 1965); Miles Lampson Killearn and Trefor Ellis Evans, *The Killearn Diaries, 1934-1946: The Diplomatic and Personal Record of Lord Killearn (Sir Miles Lampson), High Commissioner and Ambassador, Egypt* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1972).

<sup>14</sup> Helen Anne B. Rivlin, *The Dār Al-Wathā'iq in 'Ābdīn Palace At Cairo as a Source for the Study of the Modernization of Egypt in the Nineteenth Century*. (Leiden: Brill, 1970); Di-Capua, *Gatekeepers of the Arab Past*.

often carry over their authors' unshakable belief in British hegemony and their blindness to Egyptian agency. The most recent historical writing about the Second World War by Egyptian authors like 'Abd al-'Azim Ramadan and Yunan Labib Rizq remains focused on the party politics and diplomatic crises of 1939 to 1942, ignoring the longer-term connections between those events and state, defense and diplomatic policy.<sup>15</sup> In particular, all of the above accounts give short shrift to the period from 1942 to 1945, after the military crisis passed, but when wartime laws, supply shortages and economic and labor policies underwent the most crucial transformations and public debates.

By the 1970s, the failure of modernist development projects in Egypt and rise of neoliberalism led many foreign academic historians to view the culture and government of the interwar period more favorably than many Egyptian nationalists have. Afaf Lutfi al-Sayyid Marsot perhaps epitomized the idea in her book *Egypt's Liberal Experiment 1922-1936*, published in 1977, and Selma Botman's chapter in the multivolume Cambridge History of Egypt refers to "The Liberal Era, 1923-1952."<sup>16</sup> Interwar narratives focused on the liberal aspects of politics concentrate on several key events. A series of mass rural and urban protests in early 1919 in Cairo and the countryside vehemently rejected a wartime British protectorate and regime of martial law imposed when the Ottoman Empire declared war on the Allied powers. The British subsequently opted unilaterally to support a liberal constitutional monarchy and withdraw gradually from direct administration of the Egyptian government. However, it reserved the right to

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<sup>15</sup> 'Abd al-'Azīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Ramaḍān, *Miṣr Wa-Al-Ḥarb Al-'Ālamīyah Al-Thānīyah: Ma'rakat Tajnīb Miṣr Wa-Yalāt Al-Ḥarb* (Cairo: Al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-'Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 1998); Muḥammad Gamāl al Dīn Al-Masḍī, Yūnān Labīb Rizq and 'Abd al-'Aziz Ramaḍān, *Miṣr Wa-L-Ḥarb Al-'Ālamīyah Al-Thānīyah* (Cairo: Al-Ahram Center for Political and Strategic Studies, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *Egypt's Liberal Experiment, 1922-1936* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Selma Botman, "The Liberal Era, 1923-1952," in *The Cambridge History of Egypt. Vol. 2, Modern Egypt, From 1517 to the End of the Twentieth Century*, eds. M. W. Daly and Carl F. Petry (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

manage Egypt's foreign affairs, to preserve the legal privileges of foreigners, to keep direct control of the Sudan, and to maintain a small garrison of soldiers at the Suez Canal. The 1936 treaty eliminated extraterritoriality for foreigners, but institutionalized the other aspects of Britain's hands-off dominance. A return to the many political memoirs of the major politicians, notably Muhammad Husayn Haykal and Ismail Sidqi, allowed the narrative of the parliamentary battles of the interwar years to dominate the political historiography of Egypt more generally. Others identified the tenuousness of liberal nationalist and democratic ideologies in classist and Orientalist analyses valorizing the Pharaonic territorial nationalism popular among the upper classes in the 1920s and describing the shift to Islamic themes in literary production and in youth and political groups in the 1930s as a "crisis of liberalism."<sup>17</sup>

However, these critiques radically severed the meaning of liberalism in political culture from liberalism in the judicial system or political economy. Many histories of the interwar era have since revisited and problematized the meaning of liberalism in this period, with an eye to the effects of British neocolonialism and the growth of the Egyptian state. In particular, Egyptian and foreign historians have both emphasized King Faruq's and certain radical nationalist groups' opportunistic sympathy for the Axis as emblematic both of the weakness of liberal democratic principles at the heart of the Egyptian political system and of the futility of their resistance to British hegemony. The recent work of James Jankowski and Israel Gershoni has punctured this narrative and put the minor historical importance of Nazi sympathy in Egypt in the context of the much

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<sup>17</sup> Nadav Safran, *Egypt in Search of Political Community: An Analysis of the Political and Intellectual Evolution of Egypt, 1804-1952* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1961); P. J. Vatikiotis, *The History of Modern Egypt: From Muhammad Ali to Mubarak* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969); Charles D. Smith, "The 'Crisis of Orientation': The Shift of Egyptian Intellectuals to Islamic Subjects in the 1930's," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 4:4 (1973).

more widespread Egyptian denunciation of Axis racism and neo-imperialism.<sup>18</sup> I argue that the focus of the historiography on liberalism and authoritarianism as populist political ideologies prevents a clear analysis of the war as a social and economic event in Egypt. The state of siege itself has helped legitimate narratives that nothing happened to the Egyptian state. By establishing functional boundaries between the state's emergency laws and police organs and the institutions of the civil state, the continued state of siege allowed later critics to ignore the less visible innovations of the state while criticizing political malaise. But what were these less visible innovations?

## BEYOND COLLABORATION AND RESISTANCE

Imperial history has emphasized the ways the Second World War contributed to the demise of colonial empires. However, the war also transformed colonized states and societies in long-lasting ways that have received less direct attention. Focusing on Egyptian agency through the war reveals the direct and rapid changes in the material and ideological basis of local governance during war time, how these changes both emulated and resisted colonial forms of governance, and how the experience of war itself affect both British and Egyptian technocratic knowledge on the state and economy.

Stark divides in the research programs and methodology of historians that prioritize the agency of colonized subjects, such as the Subaltern Studies group, and the imperial historiography that dominate so many narratives about war and empire, make dialogue and synthesis between them difficult.<sup>19</sup> As Frederick Cooper has argued, the

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<sup>18</sup> Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Confronting Fascism in Egypt: Dictatorship Versus Democracy in the 1930s* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2010).

<sup>19</sup> Dane Kennedy, "Imperial History and Post-Colonial Theory," in *The Decolonization Reader*, ed. James D. Le Sueur (New York: Routledge, 2003).

Subaltern program of identifying the autochthonous sources of resistance to colonial domination, epitomized in Ranajit Guha's *Dominance without Hegemony*, "constrain(s) the search for precise ways in which power is deployed and the ways in which power is engaged, contested, deflected and appropriated."<sup>20</sup> In Egypt, the war collapsed the careful boundaries and distinctions that separated Egyptian cultural and political life from a sometimes distant neocolonial British control. The sudden, shared events of war forced Egyptians and British together, in a short period of time and at every social level, and it defined shared or competing goals. My narrative of the war therefore seeks to explain British and Egyptian involvement and interactions in the shared enterprise of governance through the careful employment of sources and perspectives in English and Arabic from government officials and private individuals.

Several early British assessments of the impact of the war on the Egyptian state focused on the Middle East Supply Center (MESC), a British inter-ministerial council that coordinated agricultural planning and limited trade resources across the Middle East. These histories considered the British to have dictated policy and viewed any Egyptian responses as either obedience or resistance.<sup>21</sup> The first Egyptian historians who focused on the wartime economic crises and policies did not have access to the Egyptian archives and therefore these studies reflect a nationalist idiom, that considered domestic policies as completely transient and entirely dependent on politicians either aligned with or

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<sup>20</sup> Frederick Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *The American Historical Review* 99:5 (1994), 1517.

<sup>21</sup> See A. R. Prest, *War Economics of Primary Producing Countries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1948); E. M. H. Lloyd, *Food and Inflation in the Middle East, 1940-45*. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1956); Martin W. Wilmington, *The Middle East Supply Centre* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1971).

opposed to British control.<sup>22</sup> The rise of Marxism among Egyptian historians at ‘Ain Shams University in the 1960s for the first time sought to link economic analysis to the history of politics and social policy. The most direct contribution of this school to Second World War history is ‘Asim Disuqi’s *Egypt in the Second World War*. Based on Disuqi’s master’s thesis, it contains the first analysis of the differential roles liberal, leftist and Islamist ideologies played in political negotiations on the economy during and after the war. Disuqi’s contribution includes his analysis of the complicated liberal attitude towards the expansion of state power in the war: He carefully describes the shifting arguments between professionals, capitalists, government officials and politicians over the proper level of wages, rents and prices, on which many former allies differed.<sup>23</sup> By contrast, Egyptian Marxists most commonly depict the large landowning bourgeoisie dominating economic policymaking in this era, with British intervention playing a negative but generally passive role, in *longue-durée* analyses.<sup>24</sup> Other members of this school have therefore not followed up on the topic of the war’s effect on Egypt.

In the 2002 volume *War, Institutions and Social Change in the Middle East*, editor Steven Heydemann argues social scientists and historians have had difficulty defining the effect of war on colonized states. Charles Tilly’s influential Social Science Research Council research project of the 1970s, published in *The Formation of National States in Western Europe*, popularized a strongly Eurocentric model of state and social

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<sup>22</sup> See Ragaei W. El-Mallakh, “The Effects of the Second World War on the Economic Development of Egypt,” (Ph.D., Rutgers University, 1955); Muhammad Mutawālli, *Tārīkh Miṣr Al-Iqtisādī Wa-L-Ijtīmā’ī Khilāl Al-Ḥarb Al-‘Ālamiya Al-Thāniya, 1939-1945*. (Cairo: Dār al-Thaqāfa lil-Tibā’a wa-l-Nashr, 1977).

<sup>23</sup> ‘Āṣim Dasūqī, *Miṣr Fi Al-Ḥarb Al-‘Ālamiyah Al-Thāniyah* (Cairo: Al-Manẓama al-‘Arabīya li-l-Tarbīya wa-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-‘Ulūm, 1976), 212-217; 311-321.

<sup>24</sup> Most notably, the combined work of Disuqi and Ra’uf Abbas recently published in English as Ra’uf ‘Abbās Ḥāmid and Assem El-Dessouky, *The Large Landowning Class and the Peasantry in Egypt, 1837-1952* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2011).

development in war.<sup>25</sup> In Tilly's model, the mobilization of financial and demographic resources for war leads directly to the formation of centralized nation-states. Heydemann proposes a different analytical model for the effects of war in the Middle East, where he writes "war making has been indirect, mediated and deeply transnationalized."<sup>26</sup> Rather than leading directly to the consolidation of institutions and an increase in state power, he argues war turns "the structure and roles of the state into highly contested issues of public debate."<sup>27</sup> In their article in the volume, Heydemann and Vitalis argue Allied economic control policy in Egypt and Syria in World War II implemented through the MESC introduced new "Keynesian" étatist institutions and norms well before the postcolonial states did in the 1950s. Following Heydemann's thesis, they argue, however, that these policies had a much more limited and shorter-term effect on the structure of the political economy than in Allied countries themselves. They argue that under the pressure of local elites, free-market capitalism returned to both countries when the MESC broke apart under Anglo-American commercial competition soon after the war's end.<sup>28</sup> By contrast, Elizabeth Thompson depicts the Second World War in Syria as a unique period of increased mass political mobilization for welfare services, which the Vichy and Free French increased in the early stages of the war to hold on to the last thread of legitimacy

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<sup>25</sup> Charles Tilly and Gabriel Ardant, *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1975), cited in Steven Heydemann, "War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East," in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 13. See Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics* (New York; Toronto: Free Press; Maxwell Macmillan Canada, 1994) for a similar variation on this argument.

<sup>26</sup> Heydemann, "War, Institutions, and Social Change", 9.

<sup>27</sup> Heydemann, "War, Institutions, and Social Change", 17-18. 20

<sup>28</sup> Robert Vitalis and Steven Heydemann, "War, Keynesianism, and Colonialism: Explaining State-Market Relations in the Postwar Middle East," in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 133.



in their colonies.<sup>29</sup> After the French withdrawal in 1943 and Syrian and Lebanese independence, elite politicians further accelerated the funding of health and education, but began to direct these welfare efforts towards state-directed corporatist organizations. Most importantly, Thompson argues that the welfare programs that successfully came into existence did so in relation to the strength of popular demands of non-elite interest groups, rather than as the result of a top-down design.

New studies into specialized fields of technical expertise that enabled the diffusion and elaboration of colonial power, like agronomy and irrigation engineering, economics, sociology, anthropology, and public health provide a means of showing the interactions between state policies, ideas of governance and public demand. Timothy Mitchell's *Rule of Experts* in particular has reopened the study of the Egyptian political economy prior to 1952, which a generation of scholars had consigned to the realm of out-of-date positivism, with a focus on the intellectual/discursive construction of universal national "economies" in the colonial setting.<sup>30</sup> Manu Goswami developed this concept from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century geographic imagining of the Indian economy, the consolidation of a scientific field of economics opposing colonial exploitation through the nationalist mobilization of boycotts and *swadeshi* (home cloth spinning) and industrial planning movements of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>31</sup> In both these cases, Indian and Egyptian elites,

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<sup>29</sup> See Elizabeth Thompson, *Colonial Citizens: Republican Rights, Paternal Privilege, and Gender in French Syria and Lebanon* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Elizabeth Thompson, "The Climax and Crisis of the Colonial Welfare State in Syria and Lebanon During World War II," in *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East*, ed. Steven Heydemann (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 59-94.

<sup>30</sup> In particular, Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), Chapter 3. "The Character of Calculability," 80-119; Omnia S. El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory: Subjects of Knowledge in Colonial and Postcolonial Egypt* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2007) elaborates this theme.

<sup>31</sup> Manu. Goswami, *Producing India: From Colonial Economy to National Space* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

while products of European education and collaborators with different forms of European colonial domination, were the driving force in the definition of their own national economies. By the 1930s, the urban Egyptian public was articulating what they demanded of the state in the language of social and agricultural science. Considering the global economic shocks of that decade, British administrators could at best keep up with an ideologically charged discourse linking and permeating metropole and colony alike. Such an approach to the technological and ideological factors behind wartime policy in Egypt can expand Heydemann's idea about the mediated nature of war in the colonized Middle East. There were more levels of mediation in the Egyptian administration, and hence more complexity to Egyptian political interests and outcomes during and after the war, than merely the domination of the metropolitan British military. Just as the British and Allies mediated the strategic military and world-scale economic forces affecting Egypt, the new technocratic Egyptian ministries mediated the Allied labor and supply demands and attacks on the home front for the Egyptian public.

A productive way of viewing these new and transitory wartime practices and institutions is to look to what Nicos Poulantzas calls their "institutional materiality."<sup>32</sup> Just because the Egyptian institutions failed to achieve all their intended goals does not mean these goals did not affect the outcome of events altogether. Just as the British, Egyptian elite politicians and common Egyptians as workers and consumers shaped institutions to their ends, the material existence of these institutions in return affected the horizons and aims of those actors. Poulantzas further remarks that the interaction between political interests and state institutions are worked out through "spacial and temporal

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<sup>32</sup> Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: NLB, 1978), 49-53.

matrices.”<sup>33</sup> The direct threat of war violence certainly intensified the attitude of state institutions towards controlling borderlands and the rhythm of transportation through civilian and military space, but these institutions also confronted the spacial disorder of sudden urbanization due to war industrialization, and nationalized the nation’s grain fields and the agricultural calendar itself. In conditions of strained resources and limited time, the bureaucrats who shaped these evolving institutions played crucial politicized roles. Fenced in by the various requirements of different British agents, meager budgets, the criticism of opposition politicians and popular demands, these bureaucrats practiced what Ilana Feldman names “tactical bureaucracy.”<sup>34</sup> Just as Egyptian politicians, faced with the paradox of Egyptian sovereignty, practiced the politics of the possible, Egyptian bureaucrats formed their own social networks, pursued their own aspirations (and on occasion, committed their own crimes) in the process of piloting the ship of state.

## LAW AND REORDER

The negotiations over the establishment of the liberal constitutional monarchy between 1923 and 1936 succeeded in establishing Egyptian sovereignty in international law, which profoundly affected political behavior and discourse. The literate public perceived this sovereignty as legitimate precisely because it was expressed in an idiom of liberal political representation, through the first mass male franchise.<sup>35</sup> The early political Islamists of the 1930s and 1940s, among them the Muslim Brotherhood, proposed

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<sup>33</sup> Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 69.

<sup>34</sup> Ilana Feldman, *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917-1967* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 17-20.

<sup>35</sup> Abdeslam. Maghraoui, *Liberalism Without Democracy: Nationhood and Citizenship in Egypt, 1922-1936*. (Durham [N.C.]: Duke University Press, 2006) argues the fundamentally anti-democratic nature of the 1923 constitution, and its disregard of Egyptian social convention and culture, has become a fundamental feature of Egyptian political culture to the present.

alternative forms of sovereignty based on Islamic law, but they participated in mainstream political life and even ran candidates for parliament before turning to political terrorism after the Second World War.

The neocolonial conception of sovereignty the Egyptian and British elite shared complicated protest against British imperialism. Politicians from all parties as well as Kings Fu'ad and Faruq sought to channel populist opposition to the British for their own ends, but this opposition often turned into independent protest against the elected Egyptian government itself because of its collaboration with the British. Dipesh Chakrabarty identifies this as one of the key problems for postcolonial politics: accounting for the persistence of disobedient, illegal and even violent political protest, a tool that had been essential to anti-colonial resistance, once the public has the ability to elect its representatives in a sovereign, postcolonial state. Nehru could not countenance it: "We have democracy in India. ... We cannot get anywhere by beating up one another or breaking the laws."<sup>36</sup> Although Egypt remained under more significant British coercion in the 1940s than India was in the 1950s, its symbolic link of sovereignty with liberal legality was similar. The Egyptian state struggled with the rise of mass political media and mobilization in the 1930s and had not yet resolved the contradictions of liberal attitudes towards speech, publication and protest and the threat they could pose to the dominant expressions of the Egyptian state and the Egyptian nation.

The approach of the Second World War acutely tested but ultimately affirmed this negotiated, if flawed, definition of Egyptian sovereignty. The British military eventually moved hundreds of thousands of troops into dozens of military bases, mainly on the

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<sup>36</sup> Dipesh Chakrabarty, "'In the Name of Politics': Democracy and the Power of the Multitude in India," in *From the Colonial to the Postcolonial: India and Pakistan in Transition*, eds. Dipesh Chakrabarty, Rochona Majumdar and Andrew Sartori (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007), 32.

outskirts of settled land, but also in highly visible urban areas, as Egypt became both the crucial logistical base for all operations in the Eastern Mediterranean and Middle East as well as the main British war front in the west from 1940 to 1942. The British largely dictated Egyptian foreign relations with Axis countries, and as stated before, mostly monopolized foreign trade with Egypt. However, the British recognized the symbolic value of Egyptian sovereignty in organizing and defusing Egyptian domestic political and social discontent. The negotiated vehicle for achieving both military efficiency and domestic pacification was an Egyptian emergency law, based on the French *état de siege*. What the British failed to anticipate was the deep effect this interlude in constitutional governance would have on the Egyptian state and political life. Rather than sparking an immediate crisis between the Egyptian political elite and government that the reimposition of British martial law could have caused, or a dictatorship of the executive, the state of siege instead caused a slow transformation in the meaning of the law and sovereignty in Egypt. In short, it institutionalized and legitimated illiberal security practices alongside the traditional, liberal judiciary and a liberal (if dysfunctional) electoral government.

The acquiescence of civil society to the prerogative of executive power in states of emergency has been a permanent problem for liberal political philosophers. John Locke and J.S. Mill both acknowledged this essential role of the state to secure private property, despite their recommendation of limits to its interventions.<sup>37</sup> Legal scholars have been sensitive to historical change in their analyses of the state of emergency and have usefully described the genealogy and evolution of what were typically military measures during the 19<sup>th</sup> century into a sophisticated security apparatus in the present

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Neocleous, *Critique of Security* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 32-38.

day.<sup>38</sup> However, this type of argumentation focuses on the state as the author of legislation and ideology without equal emphasis on how legal bureaucracies operate or how the general public experiences them. Foucault's description of the evolution of political power in modern states from the physical, coercive "sovereign" power of the military, police, law and courts, through the various institutions of discipline to the capillary, microsocial and self-enforcing practices of "governmentality" (which he called "security" in his first lectures on the topic) instead incrementally deemphasizes the power of government institutions over social and scientific discourse in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>39</sup> This model has trouble accounting for the practice of power at historical conjunctures like wars or revolution, and in places like colonial states, where the undemocratic domination of a foreign power disrupts the consolidation of microsocial power.<sup>40</sup>

Recent studies on the role of law in colonial empires have done more to deconstruct the positivist narrative of progress that previously made the development of western legal systems an invisible and natural tool of modernization, and to tell the social history of colonized people through these courts. Archival work throughout the formerly colonized world reveals the inherently complex, plural nature of the legal institutions of colonial states.<sup>41</sup> Throughout the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, European states established strong trading links and in many cases, military dominions, of various

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<sup>38</sup> David Dyzenhaus, "The Puzzle of Martial Law," *The University of Toronto Law Journal* 59:1 (2009); Mark Neocleous, "From Martial Law to the War on Terror," *New Criminal Law Review: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal* 10:4 (2007); Sadiq Reza, "Endless Emergency: The Case of Egypt," *New Criminal Law Review: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal* 10:4 (2007).

<sup>39</sup> Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures At the Collège De France, 1977-78* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1-54.

<sup>40</sup> Markus Daechsel, "Sovereignty, Governmentality and Development in Ayub's Pakistan: The Case of Korangi Township," *Modern Asian Studies* 45:1 (2011): 131-157, provides a useful rethinking of Foucault's sovereignty/discipline/governmentality three-part spectrum of power relations to argue why late- and post-colonial states have had to emphasize sovereign power over fine-tuned power.

<sup>41</sup> Lauren A. Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Peter Fitzpatrick, *The Mythology of Modern Law* (London: Routledge, 1992).

legitimacy and legality. This situation led to an enmeshment of the jurisdiction of civil, shari‘a and consular courts and legal systems.<sup>42</sup> Historians of India have also emphasized the paradox of British liberal legality as it applied differently to Westerners and Indians, as well as to different social classes of Indians. As an ideology of rule, the juxtaposition of universal liberal values with the fundamental racial difference of the colonial subjects justified the eternal postponement of their legal rights.<sup>43</sup> Yet this did not prevent the courts from developing into a forum for political contention by which Indians, their lawyers and later the Indian judiciary could fight for fairness under the system or at least reveal the hypocrisy of British standards.<sup>44</sup> Ayesha Jalal has shown how strength of the judiciary in postcolonial India has been a strong factor for political pluralism against the various factors of authoritarianism, especially compared to Pakistan, where the courts fell early into executive control and have only recently regained autonomous power.<sup>45</sup>

Is it possible to reconcile Foucault’s critique that systems of legal justice are merely masks for real power relations with the seeming salvation of liberal values in colonial legal pluralism? Nasser Hussein has argued that the performative aspect of British violence during periods of martial law in its colonies, such as the massacre by machine gun of a crowd in Amritsar, Punjab in 1919, was a permanent tool for defending

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<sup>42</sup> Julia Ann Clancy-Smith, *Rebel and Saint: Muslim Notables, Populist Protest, Colonial Encounters (Algeria and Tunisia, 1800-1904)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Will Hanley, “Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria, 1880-1914,” (Ph.D., Princeton University, 2007).

<sup>43</sup> Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993); Bernard S. Cohn, *Colonialism and Its Forms of Knowledge: The British in India* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), 57-75.

<sup>44</sup> Radhika Singha, *A Despotism of Law: Crime and Justice in Early Colonial India* (Delhi; New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Nasser Hussain, *The Jurisprudence of Emergency: Colonialism and the Rule of Law* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> Ayesha Jalal, *Democracy and Authoritarianism in South Asia: A Comparative and Historical Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 51-53, 199.

the colonial state's threatened sovereignty.<sup>46</sup> He has also described contemporary states of emergency as no longer distinct from civil legal systems, but "rather part of a larger methodology of governance."<sup>47</sup> Spieler speaks of the "frequency" with which "legal experiments under a state of emergency has wound up as norms,"<sup>48</sup> while Raman has analyzed the "oscillation" between trying brigandage under military, civilian and treason codes of law in early colonial south India.<sup>49</sup> All of these scholars are trying to replace the temporally static, if institutionally intricate, models of either Foucault's micropower or the infinite toolbox legal pluralism, with a more dynamic analysis of the relationship between legal institutions and power. The liberal fallacy is that the legal system represents a permanent solution to the problems of justice and domination. Through the constant production of a variety of types of legislation, and through the changing spaces of their execution, the contours and operational logic of legal systems are always constantly being remade.

Colonial Egypt's pluralistic legal hierarchy has framed similar debates in the literature over the relationship between law and power. Nathan Brown's *The Rule of Law in the Arab World* has drawn attention to the importance of the judiciary as a central institution of the colonized Egyptian state.<sup>50</sup> Until the promulgation of the 1923 constitution, the power to make legislation governing and to pass judgments on an individual or corporation in Egypt or even on the Government itself was fragmented

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<sup>46</sup> Hussain, *The Jurisprudence of Emergency*, 128.

<sup>47</sup> Nasser Hussain, "Hyperlegality," *New Criminal Law Review: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal* 10 (2007), 515.

<sup>48</sup> Miranda Frances Spieler, *Empire and Underworld: Captivity in French Guiana*, Vol. Captivity in French Guiana (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011), 15.

<sup>49</sup> Bhavani Raman, "Genealogies of the Security State: Special trials, Martial Law and Sovereignty in Early Colonial South India," Lecture at the University of Michigan, January 31, 2014.

<sup>50</sup> Nathan J. Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World: Courts in Egypt and the Gulf* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997).



between an autocratic khedive, his aristocratic ministers, the British residency and, because of the Ottoman Capitulations, the consulates of several European nations. The contest for political and economic power between these actors was only regulated through the legal codes of the Native and especially Mixed Courts, which were run by an independent international commission to adjudicate all disputes between foreigners and Egyptians. Brown's revisionist narrative of the origins of this system stresses the Egyptians' strategic creation of the Mixed Courts to hold off British influence, in contrast to the more common depiction of the imposition of these western legal forms for the purposes of economic neocolonialism. After the end of the Mixed Courts and the British evacuation, he argues that the purely Egyptian judiciary began resisting the growing power of the Egyptian executive branch as epitomized by its frequent resort to emergency law after the consolidation of the state of siege in the Second World War.<sup>51</sup> Brown indicates that despite its independent role, the judiciary has always played an important role in the growth and centralization of the state, not because it legitimated it or gave a voice to civil society, but because it regulated and made predictable the actions of the regime itself.

Timothy Mitchell and Samera Esmeir have exposed a different perspective on the relationship between power and the rule of law in colonized Egypt. Despite the fact that the British routinely counterposed their support of the rule of law and independent judiciary to the "Oriental despotism" of the prior system of Ottoman administrative justice to justify their military occupation, Mitchell and Esmeir have noted the growth during this period of areas of "private sovereignty" or "non-juridical legalities,"

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<sup>51</sup> Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 82.

particularly in the private village plantation or *'ezba*.<sup>52</sup> Drawing on a Foucaultian understanding of the capillary spread of power, they argue the British and Egyptian authorities simply ignored *'ezba* owners' violence and demands for unpaid labor on infrastructure residents by excluding the *'ezba* from state jurisdiction, "purifying" the rule of law.<sup>53</sup> Unlike Brown, who sees the state of exception as ultimately disruptive to the consolidation of the Egyptian state, Esmeir believes exceptional legality was definitive of the regular legality of the colonial state.

I find useful concepts in both these perspectives as they regard the rule of law and the institutionalization of the Egyptian state. However, the unique turn of local and global events in the Second World War challenges the exact applicability of either as a model for this period of transition at the end of Britain's colonial power in Egypt. Brown's argument stresses the distinction between the strategies of the executive and the judiciary, but the neocolonial division of both executive and judicial power between an Egyptian and European military, bureaucracy and judiciary complicated this relationship. The Second World War arrived at a moment when the decolonization of the courts was near completion, but still not entirely assured. The state of siege military courts allowed Egyptian judges (on a panel with two junior officers from the Egyptian military) jurisdiction for the first time over all foreign civilians, to which the British uneasily consented to ensure Axis citizens would be under firm legal control. This process created a tighter cooperation between the Ministries of Justice, Interior and the Council of Ministers than prior to the British occupation. In contrast to the indefinite legalities

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<sup>52</sup> Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 71-73; Samera Esmeir, *Juridical Humanity: A Colonial History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> Esmeir, *Juridical Humanity*, 237-239. Her argument in chapter 5, "Red Zones" is part of a larger theoretical contribution that the isolation of non-juridical violence towards workers in these private estates purified the juridical humanity of these workers in the zones where public law could reach them.

Esmeir argues prevailed at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the war forced the suspension of the laissez-faire logic of colonial legality. But this does not imply the Egyptian state or its politicians abandoned a liberal project of governance or property ownership. Where the exceptional legality of Cromer-era Egypt sought to make the liberal rule of law sovereign by institutionally ignoring its violations, the state of siege institutionalized a separate code of law and a court system that was not subject to the oversight of the elected liberal institutions, but which preserved the parallel existence of those institutions during a time of crisis.

#### THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF

The argument of this dissertation is twofold. First, I argue that the war was a formative event in the 20<sup>th</sup> century history of Egypt. This is not merely a critique of the historiography that has sidelined and downplayed it, it is productive of a new social history. Because of the war, a larger proportion of Egyptian society experienced both new opportunities and social mobility — and trauma and immiseration — than at any other prior point in the century. As a result, the war helped consolidate new types of knowledge about society and Egyptian nationhood. For a time, optimism about Egypt's role in the fight for global democracy helped reinforce liberal attitudes of progress in domestic and international political life. At the same time, fears of changes resulting from labor migration and mass poverty led to the conception of new social crises and abstracted discourses on their reform.

Second, I propose that, despite the many limitations to its powers, Egyptian state played a crucial and active role in mediating Egyptians' experiences of the war and the

new ways of thinking the war provoked. These changes had huge consequences for the state's interaction with the British diplomatic corps and military, its relationship with Egyptians and foreign residents, and its role in defining nationalist ideology. The dissertation will therefore follow three intertwined themes: the changing meaning of Egyptian sovereignty, the new roles of law and bureaucracy in structuring politics and society, and the fraught interchange between Allied war narratives and Egyptian national narratives.

The question of sovereignty epitomizes the reasons the Second World War has trouble fitting in Egyptian historiography. In the period from 1923 to 1952, British diplomacy and the British military presence defined Egyptian sovereignty with distinct but untested limits. With the coming of the war, these distinctions blurred and sovereignty became an official paradox. The British military was both Egypt's essential defense against Axis invasion and an aggressive occupation. The Egyptian state was neutral under international law, but it was also enthusiastically assisting the British. I argue that the Egyptians worked quickly to bracket these paradoxes with legal fictions and spacial and bureaucratic regimes. Chapter one presents some better known aspects of the problem of sovereignty in interwar Egypt. After 1923, British diplomats continued to make coercive threats to achieve goals in Egypt. These threats spoiled any stable relationship between King Faruq and elected parties and officials. However, during the war, the British did not have the power to directly police political, social or economic policies tied to their broader aims. The clever and unlikely solution to this problem, examined in chapter two, was the institution of the state of siege. The British gave up their discretion to intervene in domestic problems in exchange for logistical cooperation

and extraordinary powers for the Egyptian prime minister to carry out these wartime goals. Chapter three illustrates the problematic enforcement of this legal institution in Egyptian space. Egyptian politicians and police used the state of siege to keep distinct Allied (extraterritorial) from Egyptian (territorial) regimes of jurisdiction. As much as the Egyptian state gained in control over its civilians, it frequently had to compromise in its ability to prevent the unruliness and crime of British soldiers in urban areas.

Egypt experienced more obvious limitations on its independence in the economic realm. Here, the British Empire wielded weapons of weakness: its control over Egypt's very limited imports and its power to compel Egypt to accept unlimited Sterling credits in exchange for Egyptian pounds, examined in chapters four and five, respectively. These shortcomings further undercut the diplomatic fiction keeping British and Egyptian space separate. For example, the promise of high wages drew hundreds of thousands of Egyptians to work in British military workshops. Yet these two restrictions also provoked many different creative responses. These responses included the acceleration of import-substitution industrial production, the refusal to yield up agricultural goods for export to the British Empire, the conversion of the Egyptian debt to local currency, the limited expansion of income taxation, and an unfortunate eventuality: a vigorous black market. While the Egyptian state yielded sovereignty in military matters, chapter six examines how the military crisis expanded Egypt's sovereignty over foreign civilians. In a development both extremely troubling to British diplomats but essential to the negotiated scheme of shared power, Egyptian security gained responsibility for interning potential Italian fifth columnists and sequestering Italian goods — and even for policing Allied civilians who committed crimes that threatened war aims. I argue that this legal and

administrative framework, and not xenophobic nationalism alone, helped contribute to the exodus of Egypt's foreign communities by the 1960s.

In the process of claiming zones of sovereignty from the British through the war crisis, the Egyptian state necessarily expanded its power and redefined its relationship to the Egyptian people themselves. Through the second theme of the dissertation, I argue this expansion of state legal power and the state bureaucracy met both encouragement and resistance from different bureaucrats, politicians and intellectuals at different times. But all these negotiations occurred as conscious redefinitions of the liberal legal and political framework and aspirations of the era. Defining liberalism in interwar Egypt presents problems, as the brief breakdown of historiography above illustrates. I seek to simplify the terms of analysis here. Because of the centrality of political economic policy to my dissertation, the default meaning of liberalism in the coming chapters is interwar Egypt's politically and legally defined regime of private property, the limited size of state institutions and the restrictions on its intervention in the private sphere. I argue that Egypt's bureaucrats transformed this regime with the intention of saving it, rather than destroying it. They had limited success.

Chapter one analyzes the ways the Great Depression prompted redistributive programs to save the vast majority of indebted peasants. In the late 1930s, the Egyptian bureaucracy began a subdivision into ministries addressing specific new forms of social scientific state knowledge: Public Health, Social Affairs, Supply, and others. The state of siege made such state interventions easier for the prime minister, but it by no means granted him the unfettered power to define "necessity" alone. Chapter two illustrates the continued negotiations between the bureaucracy and parliament over state of siege

proclamations, while chapter three analyzes the messy implementation of the emergency legal regime in Egyptian space. Because of the limitations of its resources and the compressed time it had to address problems of the war, Egyptian bureaucrats had to make functional compromises on the enforcement of laws the state of siege enabled. This was even more evident in the creation and maintenance of the food supply system, analyzed in chapter four. While this system eventually worked well enough to prevent widespread famine in the short term, its weaknesses fostered a huge increase in income inequality that threatened the liberal economy in the long term. The huge demand for Egyptian labor forced liberal entrepreneurs and the government to compromise on their long resistance to recognizing the trade union movement. However, the terms of the expansion of Egyptian industry, chapter five argues, undercut benefits for workers and worker solidarity. Unions could not venture into the British workshops, and enterprises everywhere paid wages in increasingly worthless money. These conditions both fostered and hampered the communist movement, a major threat to postwar liberalism. Egyptian bureaucrats found the state's new jurisdiction over foreign residents also meant responsibility for their welfare during a war that turned many communities into havens for refugees and broken families. These demands for support further intensified the state's interest in defining and surveilling nationality.

Official state history sublimated Egyptian war narratives in the 1950s, as distinct stories about the Second World War and the Egyptian nation's role in it. But this project was necessarily incomplete. I argue that many of the tropes of national thought originating from Egypt's war experience set precedents for and in turn reflected later wars and civil crises. This third theme brings popular narratives of social and economic

changes, which the war accelerated, back to the place they occupied in the national story at the time.

The state of siege was at first an effective tool for political and social control precisely because it aligned with the expectations and desires of the educated middle class of the era, which had been shaped by the seriousness of the war's threats and the commitment of this class to Egypt's liberal democracy. In chapters three, four and five, the narrative tropes regarding the failure of the Egyptian state to properly use its powers to protect the Egyptian people helped in a negative way to shape definitions of the proper relationship of the state and nation. Despite assurances that the war was not actually happening in Egypt, Egyptians suffered for years the traumatic threat of Axis air raids and the social traumas brought by military occupation: crime, drugs and worse, prostitution. The black market became forever after a symbol of the impossibility of social justice in Egypt. The simultaneous peaking of inflation with massive end-of-war industrial layoffs made government promises of planning and progress, encouraged by the expansion of the bureaucracy and the global victory of Fordism, laughable fictions in the eyes of most Egyptians. Despite these failures, the dialogue between the Egyptian state and Egyptian people completely reshaped the terms of Egyptian nationalism. After the war, the state *would* be expected to perceive and record all activities see everything within its territory, to plan for its progress and improvement, and to protect Egyptians as individuals and the abstractions of Egyptian culture, the Egyptian family, and increasingly, the Egyptian economy. This increased focus on the way the state must serve the nation culminates with the maneuvers analyzed in chapter six: the purification of the



Egyptian body politic by distinguishing real Egyptians, eligible for those privileges, from foreigners.

It is this national self-image that Mahmoud al-Nuqrashi presented to the United Nations in 1947. This depiction was synthesized from the technocratic reports of more than a dozen government ministries. Many of these ministries had not existed before the war, and this dissertation will examine a few of them in significant detail. I believe that the experience of the Second World War was inscribed on these new institutions. While I do not pretend that the events of a period now firmly 70 years in the past are determinative of present events, it is my intention to put forward a genealogy of the Egyptian state and political culture in a period that was formative to the conditions of the postcolonial, 'Abd al-Nasir era. The changes of this period have framed problems of individual rights, collective welfare, political representation and the sovereign power of the state until the present.

## **Chapter I**

### **The Crisis Years**

#### **Egyptian Society and the Egyptian State Mobilized in a Total War**

November 10, 1942 was a busy day for the Cairo Military Court. A panel of one civilian judge and two Egyptian army officers passed sentences on 47 cases in a single day, according to a report the military parquet (state's attorney) sent to the prime minister's office.<sup>1</sup> The Second World War had created conditions of scarcity in Egypt, plunging the weakest into poverty and enriching those who served the occupying British military. The Egyptian state, day by day, struggled to restore order. The military court passed heavy judgment on black market merchants 'Abdu Ibrahim Sayid Ahmad and Philippe Tawdrus, sentencing 20 lashes of the whip each and one and four months imprisonment, respectively, for selling consumer goods for higher than the government fixed prices. Andrea Malara and Iskandar Ar'iree were fined LE 10 and LE 5, respectively, for selling alcohol without a license, and their businesses were closed for a week each. A woman only registered as Umm 'Ali Salih (mother of 'Ali Salih, a common kunya or honorific name) was sentenced to three months in prison and a LE 50 fine for trading in wheat without a permit. Two men were charged 180 and 30 piastres for carrying (probably small) weapons without a permit. Others received more minor fines, such as 50 piasters for buying goods without a ration card, or LE 1 for trespassing on British military land.

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<sup>1</sup> DWQ 0081-030436, Report of the Cairo Military Parquet, 10 Nov. 1942.

These individual stories provide glimpses of the huge social upheaval that occurred in Egypt as a result of the war. The British military presence brought opportunity for gain, attracting Egyptian labor to urban areas, but inflation resulting from military spending upended social relations in both city and countryside. Wealthy landowners began demanding cash rents from their peasants just as the government began to requisition a large share of peasants' food crops for the cities, often giving them no choice but to sell a portion of their produce on the black market to make ends meet. Egyptian workers in the British camps enjoyed high wages but also instability and poor treatment; many took the risk of stealing food, weapons and other hardware from their stores. The fact that all these heterogeneous cases ended up in the same courtroom under an exceptional jurisdiction reveals the consolidation of a unified episteme for organizing and adjudicating them: the maintenance of public security.

The inability of weaker politicians to confront these wartime crises had prompted the British to compel King Faruq to appoint his principal political enemy, Wafd party leader Mustafa al-Nahhas, as his prime minister. They had prepared an alternative: a written abdication that British Ambassador Sir Miles Lampson delivered to Faruq in 'Abdin palace at the head of a column of tanks on February 4, 1942. In his speech at the opening session of Parliament in November 1942, after nine months in office, al-Nahhas spent the first several minutes celebrating what he considered his government's chief accomplishment: restoring morale and physical security to the country at the height of the Axis invasion. In the conclusion of his speech, al-Nahhas said,

My government is continuing negotiations with the representatives of the ally (i.e. the British) and her armed forces in this critical time to ensure for Egypt the security of her public institutions, and to reassure for her sons the security of their persons and their property, and to shield the country from the misfortunes of war.

We have received from these representatives every appreciation of the Egyptian point of view, respect for the sovereignty and independence of the country, and deference to its interests and rights.<sup>2</sup>

The final sentence weighs heavy with irony, but as a whole, this declaration unifies several important messages. The British Empire was burning through both its financial and political capital to maintain its position in Egypt and throughout the Middle East and South Asia. It had originally wanted the Egyptian army to play a more active role in the war, but al-Nahhas now understood it was only inclined to intervene in Egyptian politics with force if the security of its base in Egypt was threatened. Al-Nahhas was willing to use the full machine of the Wafd party and the expanded emergency powers of the state to provide that security. His message contains a populist element that is linked essentially to the concept of state security: a promise to shield the country from the misfortunes of war (*tajnīb al-balad min waylāt al-ḥarb*). Egypt had negotiated a division of labor with the British over the defense of the country: The British army would ensure its external defense, while the Egyptian security apparatus would ensure internal peace. In the context of al-Nahhas' policies, "misfortunes of war" can only mean a repeat of the 1919 Revolution, which occurred after several years of British authoritarian mismanagement of the Egyptian government and economy during the last world war.

Egyptian writers and intellectuals saw through al-Nahhas' sophistry. Egypt was in a crisis because it was at the very center of the maelstrom, not because the government had failed in any particular way. Several contemporary commentators defined the war as a "war of sinews" (*ḥarb al-aṣāb*), meaning a war in which the total productive force and

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<sup>2</sup> Record of the Chamber of Deputies, 19 Nov. 1942, 13.

logistical prowess of nation-states would determine victory, and not just military power.<sup>3</sup> Although Egypt was neutral, these authors bore witness that its economic and social fate had been hard wired to the Allied war effort. A more successful governmental approach, they argued, would recognize this fact and intervene more strongly to harness the productive power of Egypt. This interchange between official and public comment helped legitimate some of the more controversial policy decisions about such new interventions.

A sense of social crisis pervaded Egyptian discourse by the end of the Second World War. In this chapter, I argue the experience of the interwar period strongly framed the ways the Egyptian people conceived of and the government bureaucracy addressed this crisis during the war. On the one hand, the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1923 was a victory for the Egyptian bourgeoisie. It provided Egyptians political representation, the power to make new legislation, and constitutional guarantees of expression and private property that fostered a huge expansion of economic and cultural activity. However, the continuing British occupation prevented the development of other political issues and destabilized relations between the King and parliament. Moreover, the very mobilization of society created new problems on a scale which Egypt's elite were unfamiliar with: mass urban protest, unemployment, poverty and disease. In the 1930s, the state security apparatus began a halting expansion and elaboration beyond its traditional activities of rural surveillance and detention. With the coming of war, a series of new ministries began full operation, redefining the art of governance in Egypt. While some of these new agencies sharpened the coercive powers of the state, others sought to improve its reach with education and welfare. I argue that

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<sup>3</sup> "Egypt: War of Sinews," *Ruz al-Yusuf*, 2 July 1942; Fu'ad Muḥammad Shibl, *Aṣab Al-Harb* (Cairo: Maṭba'at al-Ma'ārif wa Maktabatha bi-Miṣr, 1944). This phrase is likely a reference to the fifth Phillipic of Cicero, which had become current in British discourse on the war.

despite the difference in their appearance, these functions served the same goal: the establishment of state security, and in the hands of its wielders, political power.

## SPLIT SOVEREIGNTY AND MASS POLITICS BETWEEN THE WARS

The British declaration of a protectorate over Egypt in 1914 upon the Ottoman Empire's declaration of war with the Central Powers precipitated a contest over Egypt's sovereignty and governance that had not been resolved by 1939. Britain's declaration of martial law and its unplanned and extensive intervention into the Egyptian economy over the course of the First World War radically changed the terms of British colonial power, which had been more minimalist and laissez-faire with regards to the political economy. The arbitrary acquisition of food grains and pack animals from rural areas, as well as extensive pressure from the British military to recruit Egyptian peasants into dangerous military work gangs in Syria and as far away as France turned mass public opinion against British plans to consolidate their power after the end of the war. Ideological and symbolic politics played an important factor, too: it was only after the British deported a delegation (later dubbed the Wafd: delegation, party) of Egyptian politicians led by Sa'ad Zaghlul intending to travel to the Versailles Peace Conference in March 1919 that rural and urban protests erupted simultaneously, an event that has become remembered in nationalist history as the 1919 Revolution.

Although anti-imperialism and demands for British evacuation were the major ideological force behind these varied protests, neither the Wafd nor the more spontaneous uprisings outside Cairo had a well-formed agenda with regards to the future form of the government of Egypt. The middling landed elite who were the leadership of the Wafd in

part sought inclusion in the formation of state policies of interest to them, while the peasantry in some cases took a more violent anti-statist stand.<sup>4</sup> British support for a constitutional regime set up by the landed elite was a strategic gambit resulting from these protests. Facing the possibility of recurring insurrection in the most populous Arab country, it became apparent to the British that force in Egypt could never be a permanent solution to securing British interests in the Empire as a whole, which were mostly elsewhere. An investigative mission led by staunch imperialist Alfred Milner, who had previously proposed incorporating Egypt into the Empire, recognized the British responsibility for the symptoms of the revolt without being prepared to offer substantial Egyptian autonomy in governance.<sup>5</sup> As a result, nearly every former minister of the Egyptian government, even Anti-Wafdist conservative politicians, refused to join any new cabinets and collaborate with the regime. The stalemate in negotiations was broken on February 28, 1922 when High Commissioner Lord Allenby unilaterally declared Egyptian independence with “four reserved points:” control of Egyptian foreign affairs, the Egyptian military, lines of communication (i.e., the Suez Canal) and the Sudan. Against the opposition of Sultan Fu’ad, Allenby sought to bring Egyptian politicians back into government by supporting a constitutional government that guaranteed them powers against the Sultan and representation in matters of legislation, along the lines of representative governments being set up at that time in the successor states to the German and Austro-Hungarian empires.

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<sup>4</sup> Reinhard C. Schulze, “Colonization and Resistance: The Egyptian Peasant Rebellion, 1919,” in *Peasants and Politics in the Modern Middle East*, eds. Farhad Kazemi and John Waterbury (Miami: Florida International University Press, 1991), 194-195.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Berque, *Egypt: Imperialism & Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1972), 315.

Elie Kedourie's account of the political compromises of the 1922 constituent assembly, which set the legal framework of the Egyptian state and political strategy for the coming 30 years, leaves no doubt that popular sovereignty was not the goal of the document.<sup>6</sup> The members of the assembly found it difficult to write a constitution that balanced the powers of the sultan (now redesignated king) and parliament that the king would not reject outright. The Wafd, discerning British aims through the assembly's support for the conservative clique, boycotted it, although they ran for seats and won a majority in the first parliament in 1924. It became quickly apparent that the constitution could stand as a symbol of liberal legality and governance — and that all parties would ignore and twist it to purposes contrary to the intentions of the drafters. The constitution defined sovereignty as residing in the Egyptian people, but political power remained sharply divided between the British, the King and now the parties elected to parliament. As Kedourie puts it,

This, then, was a model, a textbook constitution... full of checks and balances, an ordered and intricate toyland in which everything was calm and beauty. Its radical failing in the actual conditions of Egyptian politics was that it assumed and took for granted that elections in Egypt could possibly elicit, as they did elsewhere, the will of the electorate... Egyptian elections, rather, proved to be ratifications by the masses of decisions taken by the king, or else by the Cairo politicians, depending on which side had, for the time being, the upper hand.<sup>7</sup>

Politics therefore took on a symbolic and ironic aspect: instead of enforcing a present state of affairs, the constitution described an ideal achievable in the future that the parties (principally the Wafd) would use among many other political tools to gain advantages in the present.

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<sup>6</sup> Elie Kedourie, "The Genesis of the Egyptian Constitution of 1923," in *Political and Social Change in Modern Egypt*, ed. P.M. Holt (London: Oxford University Press, 1968), 355.

<sup>7</sup> Kedourie, "The Genesis of the Egyptian Constitution of 1923", 354-355.



Both Egyptian and foreign historians of Egypt have drawn soft boundaries between the flourishing political and cultural liberalism of the interwar period (the 1920s in particular), despite its flaws, and the stark inequalities of social relations, income and wealth that existed in this era, which revolutionary nationalists of the 1950s dubbed rural “feudalism.”<sup>8</sup> I want to stress, however, that it was the very legal liberalism and laissez-faire capitalism imposed during the era of Lord Cromer (1880s-1900s) that helped establish the Egyptian large landed bourgeoisie.<sup>9</sup> This class then extended its power to reproduce and protect its privileges through legislation in parliament after the 1919 revolution. Indeed, the concentration of land ownership only continued to increase in the 1920s and 30s, before reaching crisis levels thanks to the war. The percentage of land held by the superwealthy (owners of more than 50 feddans) increased from 40% in 1919 to 57% in 1945.<sup>10</sup> In rural areas, large landowners used their social and economic power to effectively lock up electoral results for the Wafd party, although this pattern became less assured as the party fragmented over time.<sup>11</sup> Despite the authoritarian aspects of social relations especially in the countryside, I argue that it is incorrect to divide these two aspects of Egyptian liberalism, which was a structural determinant of these classes that social codes and lingering aristocracy only faintly disguised.

It is simpler and more accurate therefore to consider the newest aspect of Egyptian politics between the world wars as mass participation than “liberalism” in the neutral sense. The constitution enshrined a limited freedom of the press, which heralded a

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<sup>8</sup> Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement*, 76-78.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Davis, *Challenging Colonialism: Bank Miṣr and Egyptian Industrialization, 1920-1941* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

<sup>10</sup> Gabriel Baer, *A History of Landownership in Modern Egypt, 1800-1950* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), 91-120, 224-225.

<sup>11</sup> See Ḥāmid and El-Dessouky, *The Large Landowning Class*.

golden age of private-sector publishing in Egypt and a corresponding growth in the varieties of public opinion. The granting of a universal male franchise brought contention over party loyalty and public policy into the private spaces of peasants and the urban proletariat in a much more specific way than before. However, it is difficult to describe a system as liberal in which foreign residents still enjoyed the privilege of trial in a separate judicial system, the Mixed Courts, best characterized by a governing commission of several European states. Struggles over this commission guaranteed political and diplomatic intervention in, rather than exclusion from, the judiciary and court system.<sup>12</sup> In subsequent chapters, I will analyze just how extensive the intervention of wartime emergency measures was on the legal privileges Europeans enjoyed prior to the war.

The principal political issue in Egypt between 1923 and 1936 was the effort to negotiate a bilateral treaty with the British that would replace the unilateral British declaration of Egyptian independence and more properly define Egyptian sovereignty in international law. For much of the 1920s, local security issues trumped regional or global defense concerns. Particularly after the assassination of the Sirdar of Sudan Sir Lee Stack, the British were reluctant to give up their lingering advisory control over key parts of the bureaucracy like the Ministry of Interior, or direct control of the Egyptian army.<sup>13</sup> Wafd brinksmanship over the continuing British presence in administration resulted in the king dissolving parliament frequently. As Kedourie states, the election boycott

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<sup>12</sup> Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 26-29, 41-43.

<sup>13</sup> The British almost declared martial law after Stack's assassination, on 19 Nov. 1924. However, the Royal Courts of Justice recommended to the Foreign Office against either a formal declaration of martial law or extrajudicial military internment of political suspects. FO 141/672/1, 5 Jan. 1925. The issue was raised again at the beginning of the Ethiopan crisis, in a recommendation for a joint state of siege and British martial law, as a way of controlling Italians, but it was never implemented. FO 371/19053, Booth to Lampson, 13 Oct. 1935.

became one of the Wafd's only effective protests against government machinery and a bureaucracy that was often explicitly biased against them.

Calling the interwar era "liberal" also disregards the five years between 1930 and 1935 during which the king and his allies suspended the 1923 constitution with the tacit approval of the British. By 1930, King Fu'ad still resented the power the Wafd party enjoyed because of its powerful rural voting machine. He used the state fiscal crisis resulting from the plunge in the price of cotton at the start of the Great Depression to form a new government led by Isma'il Sidqi that unilaterally repealed the 1923 constitution and imposed a new basic law that restricted the franchise and dramatically reduced the size of the legislature. Sidqi managed to hold on to power for three years because of the unswerving support of the king, the cooperation of some opportunistic politicians, and because of the significant emergency economic reforms he made to usher Egypt through the global financial crisis.<sup>14</sup> In a certain regard, Sidqi's three-year administration was a dress rehearsal for the exceptional measures taken under the state of siege during the Second World War, which also disrupted liberal economic regulations to resolve a variety of economic crises. However, the state of siege would work in harmony with the 1923 constitution and obtain its legitimacy, rather than radically departing from it.

Sidqi had badly miscalculated how far he could backtrack from the gains nationalists believed they had won in 1923, and his successor Tawfiq Nassim faced increasing public protest to restore the original constitution, culminating in late 1935 with a series of college student-led rallies. Two thousand of a total 8,000 students of Fu'ad

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<sup>14</sup> This included increasing tariffs and providing tax and even rent relief for rural tenants; Malak Badrawi, *Isma'il Sidqi, 1875-1950: Pragmatism and Vision in Twentieth Century Egypt* (Richmond, Surrey: Curzon, 1996), 58-107.

University (now Cairo University) marched from Giza to the parliament building, joined in subsequent days by thousands more secondary school students, of whom two died in clashes with the police. The palace capitulated on December 12, 1935 and reinstated the 1923 constitution.<sup>15</sup> Enrollment in higher education had soared since the early 1920s, and the mass media commemorated the protests as the “year of youth.”<sup>16</sup>

King Fu‘ad’s illness and death within a few months of the protests, followed by the succession of his young and popular son Faruq to the throne and a year of Wafd rule breathed new life into the monarchic constitutional system. The final condition for the restoration of a timetable towards full Egyptian independence that liberal nationalists could believe in was the settlement of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance. After years of deadlock on negotiations, the Italian invasion of Ethiopia in 1935 compelled British negotiators to make some concessions by 1936 to the Egyptians to legitimize the presence of British troops at the Suez Canal, in the interest of imperial defense. Coming after a decade of more aggressive Italian colonization of Libya against the Senussi-led independence movement, Mussolini made signals in public and private messages acquired by British intelligence that his ultimate goal was dominance of the Mediterranean through the conquest of Egypt.

The British took this threat seriously, to the extent even of making preparations to request the Egyptians declare “martial law” (i.e., the state of siege) and begin interning

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<sup>15</sup> Ahmed Abdalla, *The Student Movement and National Politics in Egypt, 1923-1973*. (London: Al Saqi Books, 1985), 39-61. The British Military put its troops on alert, although they did not intervene, FO 371/19080 J 9717, Lampson to Hoare, 14 Dec. 1935.

<sup>16</sup> Lucie Ryzova, “Egyptianizing Modernity Through the ‘New Effendiya’: Social and Cultural Constructions of the Middle Class in Egypt Under the Monarchy,” in *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919-1952*, eds. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson and Barak A. Salmoni (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2005), 147-148.



Figure 1.1. A battle of wills, of principles, and of generations. When he took office in 1942, Wafdi party leader and Prime Minister Mustafa al-Nahhas (L) was 62 and King Faruq (R) was 21. *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, (L) February 16 (from a sycophantic soap advertisement) and (R) April 2, 1942.

Italian civilians in Egypt in September 1935.<sup>17</sup> This crucial episode is generally downplayed in the literature on interwar British military history and the European political negotiations leading to the Second World War in Europe.<sup>18</sup> The new High Commissioner Sir Miles Lampson strove to include the leaders of all parties, including the Wafdi, in negotiations to make the treaty legitimate to all future governments.<sup>19</sup> Despite its binding force in international law, the final compromise on the treaty text that the Wafdi proposed was largely symbolic. Much of what the British agreed to — its troop levels reduced to 10,000, and troops withdrawn completely from Alexandria and Cairo to

<sup>17</sup> FO 371/19052, J 5348, Kelly to Lampson, 26 Sep. 1935.

<sup>18</sup> Steven Morewood, *The British Defence of Egypt, 1935-1940: Conflict and Crisis in the Eastern Mediterranean* (London; New York: Frank Cass, 2005), 4.

<sup>19</sup> Laila Amin Morsy, "The Military Clauses of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Friendship and Alliance, 1936," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 16:1 (1984),

the Canal Zone, as a principal example — existed only in an ideal peacetime scenario. Even in 1936, both parties could envision the so-called “apprehended emergency” centering on an aggressive Germany and Italy in which, according to article seven, all such restrictions were null.

The settlement of the treaty finally allowed Egypt’s entry to the League of Nations and its explicit definition in international law as an independent state. The British High Commissioner was reduced to an ambassador and Egypt was allowed to conduct official independent diplomacy. The Egyptian Army was freed of British commanders, indeed, it developed a plan with the British to expand rapidly after 1936 albeit under the guidance of a military that ultimately restricted its access to arms and ammunition. A similar exodus of British officials occurred in every other branch of government. The powerful advisors of the Ministry of Finance and the “European department” of the Ministry of Interior stepped down by 1937; because of their existing work contracts, and after diplomatic negotiations, some British and European urban police commanders and officers and less important employees like schoolteachers and clerks working in foreign languages remained at their posts until the late 1940s.<sup>20</sup> Another article in the treaty led directly to a conference in Montreux with the nations subject to the Capitulations in 1937 that scheduled an end to the Mixed Courts and Consular Courts’ jurisdiction over foreigners in Egypt by 1949.

Despite the achievement of all these steps towards Egyptian independence, or perhaps because of them, the Wafd faced a new round of political infighting with its

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<sup>20</sup> In 1936, 900 of 1618 Europeans working for the Egyptian state were British, of whom the majority were teachers: FO 371/20125, Lampson to Foreign Office, 7 Feb. 1936. Roughly two-thirds this number remained employed in 1945, but very few remained by 1951. Personal Papers of Herbert Addison, Middle East Archive, St. Antony’s College, Oxford University, “List of British Officials in the Egyptian Service,” (Cairo, n.p., May, 1945), with handwritten annotations from November 1951.

opponents and King Faruq, who was beginning to explore his political powers. His most influential advisor was an independent politician, ‘Ali Mahir, who had become the chief of the King’s Diwan, or administration. The Wafdist campus groups had been active in the 1920s, but this event helped them reorganize in a pseudo-paramilitary organization, the Blue Shirts, and inspired a competing youth group, the Green Shirts, organized by the anti-liberal radical nationalist group Young Egypt.<sup>21</sup> The new Islamist organization the Muslim Brotherhood also intensified its recruitment of students after this date.<sup>22</sup> ‘Ali Mahir helped cultivate the political activity of Islamist groups such as the Muslim Brotherhood and Young Men’s Muslim Association, precisely to have calculated force to counter Wafdist voices in street protests.<sup>23</sup> He also began making political overtures to the Egyptian officer corps, which was expanding after the Anglo-Egyptian treaty removed old limits on its size.<sup>24</sup> After Mustafa al-Nahhas and the Wafd youth groups staged one too many loud protests against the king’s allies, Faruq dissolved his Wafdist cabinet in 1937 and held new elections. In response, the Wafd boycotted these elections in early 1938. It therefore occupied for four years an anomalous position as both the most popular party in Egypt by far and also the opposition and chief critic of government.

From 1938 to 1942, King Faruq formed coalition ministries from the members of parliament of several smaller opposition parties and technocrats. With his clout with the Egyptian officers and the public rising, ‘Ali Mahir arranged to become prime minister

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<sup>21</sup> James Jankowski has written most extensively on these groups. See James P. Jankowski, “The Egyptian Blue Shirts and the Egyptian Wafd, 1935-1938,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 6:1 (1970), James P. Jankowski, *Egypt’s Young Rebels: “Young Egypt,” 1933-1952* (Stanford, Calif.: Hoover Institution Press, 1975).

<sup>22</sup> Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942* (Reading, England: Ithaca Press, 1998), 181-186.

<sup>23</sup> However, Brynjar Lia has indicated the relationship was opportunistic on the part of Hassan Al-Banna and the Brotherhood, Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, 214-223.

<sup>24</sup> Tripp, “Ali Maher and the Politics of the Egyptian Army”, 45-71.

himself shortly before the start of the war in Europe, in August 1939. Mahir successfully installed himself as military governor, the executive of the state of siege, against the opposition of parliament. He issued the first proclamations defining Egypt's relationship to Germany and its citizens, imposing censorship and building up spacial divisions between British military areas in Egypt and the civilian population. Although Mahir cooperated with the letter of the treaty with Britain, British administrators were extremely suspicious of his connections to radical nationalist groups that made statements sympathetic to the Nazi cause, and of his power base in the Egyptian military.<sup>25</sup> In June 1940, upon the catastrophic loss of France, the British successfully pressured King Faruq to remove Mahir from power.

The following two prime ministers, Hassan Sabri and Husayn Sirri, were non-partisan politicians who found themselves in the difficult position of compromise leaders, as the British had pushed out Mahir and the King refused to accept Mustafa al-Nahhas. They struggled to keep Egyptian policy up to the tempo of events. After an initial success in Libya, the British military faced repeated setbacks in other theaters, such as the loss of Greece and Crete and the revolt of the Iraqi military under Rashid 'Ali in April 1941. Allied troop levels in Egypt increased tenfold from 40,000 to 400,000 in this period. Most troops were stationed in camps in the Western Desert or Suez Canal Zone, but a significant number lived in Cairo and Alexandria as a part of HQ and supply staffs or on leave. This caused an immense strain on the housing supply in the major cities, and the Egyptian government requisitioned apartments and capped rents by proclamation. The

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<sup>25</sup> Tripp, "Ali Maher and the Politics of the Egyptian Army", 59; Dasūqī, *Miṣr Fi Al-Ḥarb*, 165-170; Muḥammad Ḥusayn Haykal, *Mudhakkirāt Fī Al-Siyāsah Al-Miṣrīyah* (Al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma'ārif, 1977), 158-161; 'Abd al-'Azīm Muḥammad Ibrāhīm Ramaḍān, *Taṭawwur Al-Ḥarakah Al-Waṭanīyah Fī Miṣr, 1937-1948*, Vol. 2 (Beirut: al-Waṭan al-'Arabī, 1973), 55-70.



market for vice — alcohol and prostitution — exploded, catering to soldiers on leave and proclamations strictly controlled the availability and quality of these illicit pleasures to protect public health and order.

By the summer of 1941, it was clear that the wheat crop had failed after two seasons with severe shortages of artificial fertilizer. The government ramped up the haphazard supply control regime, strengthening punishments on black marketeering, adjusting flour quality rules, restricting meat consumption, and requiring farmers to inform the government of their stocks of fertilizer and crop yields. The British created the Middle East Supply Center (MESC) at this time to coordinate supply policies across the region, and many of the Egyptian proclamations bear the intellectual stamp of its engineers and economists, but its impact was still minimal. Large landowners led by Isma‘il Sidqi (and the obstructionist Wafd) opposed severe restrictions in cotton cultivation and mandates to produce more wheat for the next season.<sup>26</sup> Although a political crisis set off by Sirri’s decision to cut diplomatic ties with the Vichy French was the immediate context of his resignation on February 3, 1942, the deplorable food supply situation was arguably a more important cause.<sup>27</sup>

The coup of February 4, 1942 has been depicted as a turning point for the tenuous legitimacy of the constitutional monarchy. All three participants in this event — the British, King Faruq and Mustafa al-Nahhas and his Wafd party — emerged permanently damaged in Egyptian public opinion after the event became common knowledge in

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<sup>26</sup> FO 371/27432, J 2992, Eden conversation with Egyptian Ambassador Nashaat, 19 Sep. 1941.

<sup>27</sup> Dasūqī, *Miṣr Fi Al-Ḥarb*, ; Haykal, *Mudhakkirāt*, 163-193; Ramaḍān, *Taṭawwur Al-Ḥarakah Al-Waṭaniyah*, 165-172.

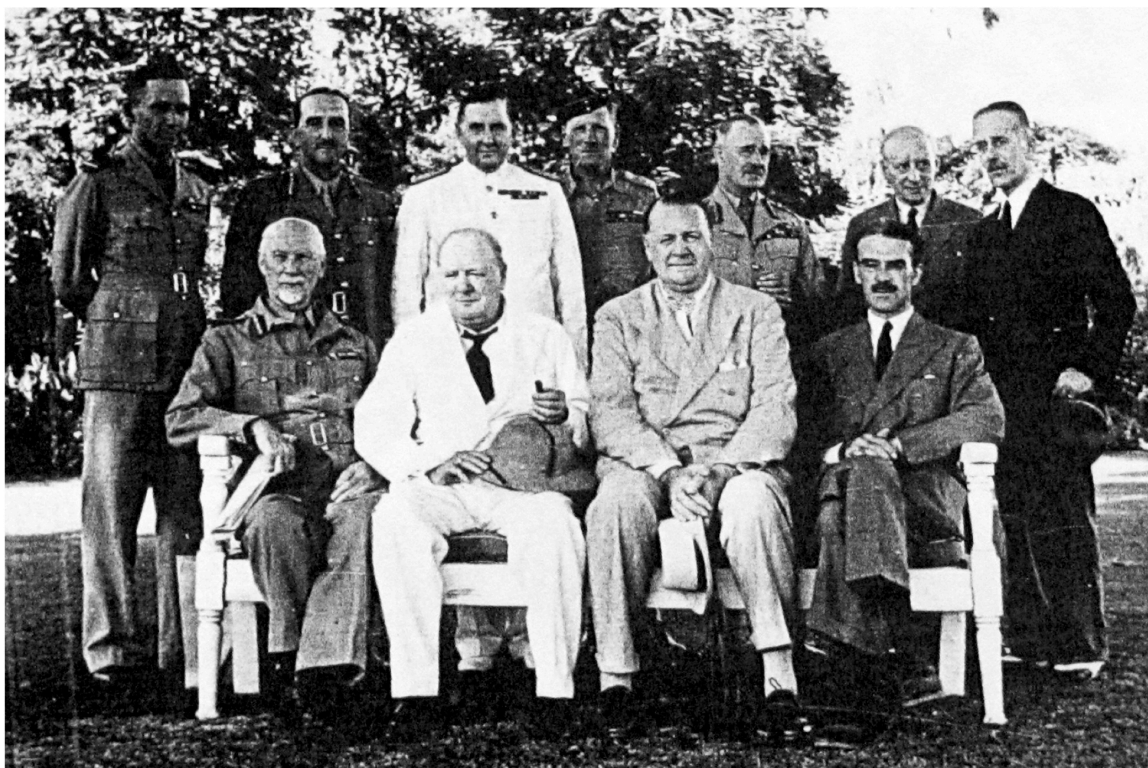


Figure 1.2. The British political and military leadership in Cairo, August 3, 1942. Seated (L-R): Field Marshal Jan Smuts, Prime Minister of South Africa; Prime Minister Winston Churchill; Ambassador to Egypt Sir Miles Lampson; and Richard Casey, Minister of State, Middle East. Standing (L-R): Air Chief Marshal Sir Arthur Tedder, General Sir Alan Brooke, Admiral Sir Henry Harwood, General Sir Claude Auchinleck, General Archibald Wavell, Sir Charles Wilson and Sir Alexander Cadogan. IWM Photo Archive, E15218.

1945.<sup>28</sup> However, there were immediate advantages to all three participants. The King kept his throne and his popularity and symbolic leadership of the national movement reached its pinnacle. The Wafd had a solid platform to build a long-term legislative program, which it confirmed with victories in generally fair elections in March 1942 that led to its longest term in office in its history (two years, eight months). Finally, the British secured the leadership of a political party that could actually force unpopular legislation through the opposition in parliament, and when appropriate, as military proclamations under the state of siege. The most remarkable aspect of al-Nahas'

<sup>28</sup> See Haykal, *Mudhakkirāt*, 193-209; Ramadān, *Taṭawwur Al-Ḥarakah Al-Waṭanīyah*, 192-218; Charles D. Smith, "4 February 1942: Its Causes and Its Influence on Egyptian Politics and on the Future of Anglo-Egyptian Relations, 1937-1945," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 10:4 (1979); Muḥammad Anīs, *4 Fibrāyir 1942 Fī Tārīkh Miṣr Al-Siyāsī* (Bayrūt: al-Mu'assasah al-'Arabīyah lil-Dirāsāt wa-al-Nashr, 1972); Berque, *Egypt* 565-566.

proclamations as military governor is their steady progression of government regulation over nearly all supply commodities. Al-Nahhas issued proclamations creating a total government monopoly on the trade of wheat and rice, grain and flour, as well as compulsory deliveries of all to the government, usually assessed at around two-thirds of each farmer's crop of these grains. Generally, the contest between the Wafd party and King Faruq produced a dynamic whereby the British could obtain the collaboration of either party when it suited them, which prevented all out revolt during the war of the sort that had occurred in Iraq.

By October 1944, when the British no longer needed the Wafd party to enforce the security measures necessary for a war front, Lampson tacitly withdrew his support for its continued government. King Faruq immediately removed al-Nahhas from office and formed a series of minority governments composed of opposition ministers that lasted until 1950. Significantly, Sa'adist party (i.e., ex-Wafdists who named their party after Sa'ad Zaghlul) Prime Minister Ahmad Mahir and his successor Mustafa al-Nuqrashi did not immediately add to or change the wartime policies set up under the Wafd, and indeed maintained the state of siege they had criticized so loudly, until October 1945.

#### THE WAR AND THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR

The increased pace of commerce and political life throughout Egypt and particularly in urban areas before and during the war prompted the Egyptian state to expand its intelligence collection and police presence. The relative sidelining of the political role of the Army after the fall of 'Ali Mahir in 1940 made the Ministry of Interior the key institution in the Egyptian government's conception and enforcement of public security.

As examined in the next chapters, Mustafa al-Nahas eventually used his power as military governor to fuse the military parquet to an office in the Ministry of Interior that he could oversee directly. But public security was not just about indiscriminate expansion. The remainder of this chapter explores the qualitative changes in the elaboration of a network of security and social services the Egyptian state undertook to comprehend a more complex society

Preferring the police to the military emulated the tactics of Britain's unofficial colonial rule of Egypt of the prior 60 years. After the defeat of the Egyptian Army in 1882, the British administration dismantled what was a 100,000-man force and kept it at a level of 10,000 troops for several decades. At the same time, the British army also withdrew to the barracks, and only became a tool for the enforcement of public security in times of extreme unrest like the 1919 revolution. The British filled the gap, in a way more financially and socially efficient, by building up their authority in the Ministry of Interior, especially after the accession of the young Khedive Abbas II Hilmi in 1892, who resisted more informal forms of British power.<sup>29</sup> The British advisor to the ministry developed a "European department" that ostensibly existed to fulfill the British commitment to protect foreign subjects of capitulatory powers. In fact, it gave the British influence over the development of the police apparatus and, even more important, access to the intelligence sources that made governing the countryside possible.<sup>30</sup>

As in India, British administrators in Egypt based their sociological "governmentality" on half-baked conceptions of Egyptian society that in turn shaped

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<sup>29</sup> Harold Tollefson, *Policing Islam: The British Occupation of Egypt and the Anglo-Egyptian Struggle Over Control of the Police, 1882-1914* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 86-109.

<sup>30</sup> The classic on the British empire's use of local informants and intelligence is C. A. Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

society in their image. In the case of criminal justice, the further application of scientific and techno-medical methods in investigation, as well as statistical analysis of countrywide trends, affirmed Orientalist ideas about the causes of crime in Egypt, in particular, the Egyptian peasant's penchant for revenge killing.<sup>31</sup> As useful as this information was to contain everyday forms of criminality that threatened a placid public order, this colonial sociology broke down when it came to anticipating, reacting to and explaining larger unrest — in particular, the 1919 revolution. The political officers of the British High Commission had constructed a network of Egyptian informants focusing on Pan-Islamist and proto-nationalist ideologies and political action among a small elite and otherwise held a stereotyped view of the behavior of farmers and workers, which left them completely unprepared for the mobilization of large groups from the urban and rural lower classes.<sup>32</sup> This event, and the tumultuous decade of political violence that followed, kept the British security administration on a more militarized footing than previous to the First World War, despite (perhaps because of) the fact that they could not improve the quality of their intelligence, especially as the British withdrew from direct administration of government.

One of the conditions of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty in 1936 was the removal of all British employees from advisory positions at all ministries (although a few British police commanders and schoolteachers would remain for more than a decade in the employ of the Egyptian government). This meant the end of the European department in the Ministry of Interior in January 1937. The last director of the department, Alexander

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<sup>31</sup> This administrative science influenced the first generation of Egyptian academic social scientists, see El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*.

<sup>32</sup> Martin Thomas, *Empires of Intelligence: Security Services and Colonial Disorder After 1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 113.

Keown Boyd, made preparations for firm channels between the British Embassy and the now purely Egyptian department of public security before he left, making informal but detailed arrangements to continue sharing information at several levels. Al-Nahas explicitly agreed to share information about political movements that were clearly threatening to both the British and the Egyptian elite, like communism. But the British also hoped for continued information about internal political matters, which pro-British Interior officials would continue to provide unofficially through the Oriental Secretary, Sir Walter Smart. “There is reason to believe Hamdy Mahboub [the current director of public security] will co-operate with the Oriental Secretary as far as possible within the limits imposed by his political chiefs,” Lampson wrote to Anthony Eden at the Foreign Office, “but if he were replaced by a less accommodating person our difficulties would obviously be greatly increased.”<sup>33</sup>

The official realization that the colonial mode of intelligence was not enough to ensure Egyptian security in the midst of the new threats of a more modern war made the British increasingly irrelevant to future Egyptian police policymaking. After 1936, the Egyptian veteran bureaucrats who assumed authority from the British at the Interior Ministry reassessed the meaning of crime and public security, and developed new policies for the enforcement of public order. A major cause of this reassessment was the state’s reaction to Egypt’s rapidly growing complex urban spaces. Between 1937 and 1947, Egypt’s overall population grew 20% from roughly 16 to 19 million, while the population of its urban governorates (Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, Port Said, Ismailia and Suez) exploded 50% from 2.2 million to 3.4 million. The number of these urban residents originally born in rural areas increased from 1.1 million to 1.7 million,

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<sup>33</sup> FO 371/20909 J 253, Lampson to Eden, 9 Jan. 1937.

indicating strong migration to the cities to find employment in war industries; at the same time, the foreign, mostly European, population fell from 160,000 to 120,000.<sup>34</sup> As a result, while overall employment in the Ministry of Interior stayed relatively constant at around 100,000 employees, officers, and laborers, the urban police force increased from roughly 20,000 to 40,000 officers during the 1940s, while the number of rural police decreased proportionally.<sup>35</sup>

Muhammad al-Babli Bey, a judge and instructor in the Royal Egyptian Police Academy, published his comprehensive *Crime in Egypt: Its Causes and Means of Remedy* in 1941. The work was based largely on the older colonial social scientific and psychological ideas of crime, but it also tries critically to comprehend the new types of political crime emerging from urban social organization and new ideologies.<sup>36</sup> Under the influence of the present circumstances, al-Babli foregrounds the negative effects of war on public security in his explanation of political activity and crimes.<sup>37</sup> Like many policemen of his generation, al-Babli is profoundly suspicious of politics. He balances an easy acceptance of Egyptian national determination, about whose progress he was still optimistic after the recent treaty settlement, but he is also wary of new nationalist movements that are rejecting the national consensus embodied in the treaty. He actually dismisses the likelihood of a repeat of the 1919 revolution because of the fragmentation of the Wafd into competing parties, and his belief that more radical ideologies like

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<sup>34</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Finance and Economy, *Census of the Population of Egypt*, (Cairo, Al-Maṭbaʿa Al-Amīriya, 1947).

<sup>35</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Finance, *Egyptian State Budgets for 1940-41 and 1948-49*, (Cairo, Al-Maṭbaʿa Al-Amīriya, 1940; 1948).

<sup>36</sup> Muḥammad Bey Al-Bablī, *Al-Ajrām Fī Miṣr: Asbābuhu Wa Turuq ʿAlājuhu* (Cairo: Dar al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, 1941). Al-Babli demonstrated more of the conventional criminology of the era in his talk on the pathology of rural murder to the Anglo-Egyptian Union published as “Crime in Egypt”, *Al Megalla*, May 1946.

<sup>37</sup> Al-Bablī, *Al-Ajrām Fī Miṣr*, 227.

communism basically don't appeal to Egyptians. However, he acknowledges that the experience of war produces multiple stresses in society that can lead to unexpected social behavior. This includes economic stresses not only of shortages and inflation leading to hardship, but also the unexpected wealth of war contracts, as well as the exposure of mobile populations to desensitizing violence and new ideologies.<sup>38</sup> All of these factors, he argues about the First World War and afterwards, have led to a decline in fearful respect (*al-hayba*) of police authority which had led not only to increased political crime, but crime of all types. As a result, he says the role of police must shift from that of social caretaker to one of more active watchfulness of any challenges to their authority from the lower classes. His suggestions of how this may be achieved are familiar, including expanding the police force and enforcing the correct message about political crime and state authority in the mass media, which he argued partisanship had irresponsibly enflamed. In tune with Rifa'at and al-Ghazali, after this relatively small section, al-Bablī dedicates a further 300 pages to address various forms of spoils-system corruption and crime that the maladministration of the interior encourages, particularly at the provincial and village level among the *mudirs* (regional administrative head), *ma'murs* (regional security chiefs), *'umdas* (mayor), *shaykhs* (village head) and *ghaffirs* (village guards).

These new ideas about space, crime, politics and security found practical application in the 1944 second edition of *Military Training for the Police* written by longtime police academy commandant 'Ali Hilmi Bey for the school curriculum. When Hilmi wrote the first edition of the book in 1927, this instruction was limited to marching in a variety of formations and the correct assembly of the police rifle. However, the Ministry of Interior decided it was time for an update "because of technical advances in

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<sup>38</sup> Al-Bablī, *Al-Ajrām Fī Miṣr*, 233.



the field around the world and lessons learned from other countries over the course of the war,” Hilmi writes in his introduction.<sup>39</sup> The textbook still contains hundreds of pages of precise drill instructions, but Hilmi added a new section entitled “Field Operations Necessary for Policemen.” This section encourages police commanders to treat any civilian protestors reflexively as violent and well-organized insurgents. As such, it is one of the first modern anti-insurgency tracts in the Arabic language. The introductory paragraph of this section is worth quoting at length:

The Police are not required to fight the enemies of the nation in the field of battle, but rather protect the amenities of everyday life and public institutions, and preserve the material foundation of the country by facilitating army operations in time of war. For the country is virtually the "spine" of the fighting army, since the ways of fighting war have developed to the point that the enemy first tries to weaken the material spirit of a country before the attack by using any possible means like air raids, misleading and discouraging rumors and forming a "fifth column." Therefore, victory is secured on the "home front" (*jibhat al-sha‘ab*) before the "battlefront." This confirms the importance of the police forces in fighting material and moral sabotage (*al-takhrīb al-mādī wal-ma‘nawī*) that the enemy promotes at the home front and preventing revolutions and conflicts especially during times of war when woe and worry are heightened.

Types of enemy actions:

1. Direct action by enemy agents, expatriates or paratroopers to attack civilian targets.
2. Air attacks that drop enemy bombs or publications.
3. Attacks by armed or unarmed ruffians (*al-ra‘ā’*) for loot and plunder, especially during times of disorganization like air raids.
4. Speeches or written statements that cast doubt on the strength of the armed forces or leadership of the government.
5. Revolutions and strife (*thawrat wa fitin*) raised by elements or classes at the prompting of the enemy with the pretext of a demand for independence or regime change... etcetera.<sup>40</sup>

The unit goes on to study the practical problems of civil defense, building sandbag emplacements and extinguishing bombs. But it returns shortly to describing the close police surveillance necessary at “sensitive” times and places. In the case that

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<sup>39</sup> ‘Alī Bey Ḥilmī, *Al-Tadrīb Al-‘Askarī Lil-Bulīs* (Cairo: Al-Matba‘a Al-Amīriya, 1944), introduction.

<sup>40</sup> Ḥilmī, *Al-Tadrīb Al-‘Askarī Lil-Bulīs*, 215.

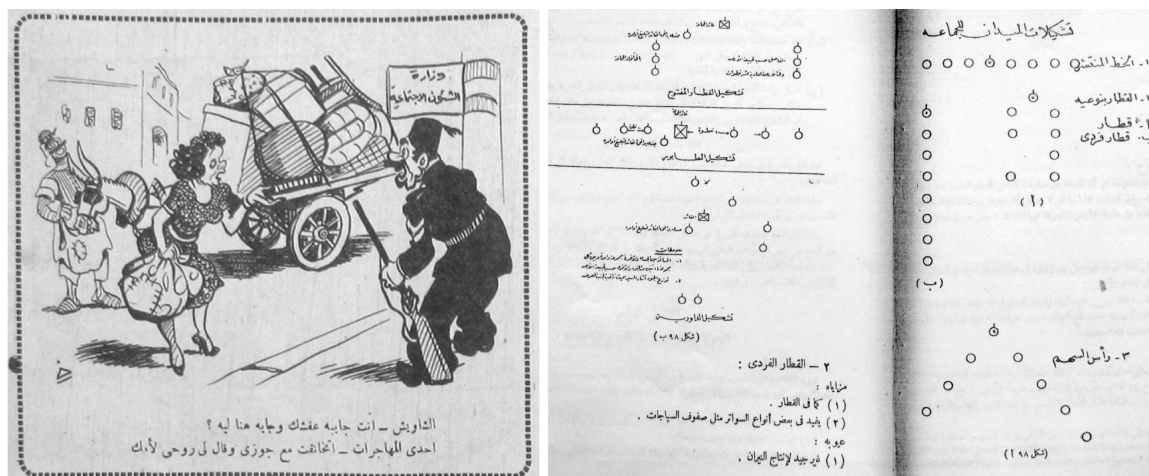


Figure 1.3. Police work became more complex. (R) An officer at the Ministry of Social Affairs is astonished when a woman shows up with all her furniture. "I had a fight with my husband and he divorced me," (lit. "he said 'go to your mother.'") *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, October 13, 1941. (L) An excerpt from Hilmi's Military Training for The Police (1944) shows the tactical formations a well-trained squadron of police soldiers takes to fight urban insurrection.

gatherings of civilians become too large or appear to pose a threat to the public order, there are instructions with distinct phases to confronting and neutralizing this threat: shaping the field, preventing the criminals (*al-ashqiya'*, literally wretches, a term long used to refer to rural bandits) from forming large groups, preparing the line for attack, and the tactics of the attack and the defense. According to Hilmi's instructions, prior to the attack, the police should form into mobile smaller units to cover all possible exits to an area, but also to divide the criminals from each other. When attacking, the police should take the most caution at entrances and exits, or bottleneck areas; they should move quickly through these areas, but also not be careless to overlook areas where criminals may be hiding (see Figure 1.3) "The best weapon in these situations is the baton or pistol; rifles are not appropriate."<sup>41</sup> Once an area is clear, Hilmi advocates a sophisticated network of relay stations to maintain constant surveillance and prevent the protest/gathering/looting from breaking out anew.

<sup>41</sup> Hilmi, *Al-Tadrib Al-Askari Lil-Bulis*, 227.

This complicated tactical instruction is a significant development from the practices of the Cairo Police and judiciary from only a decade earlier. After the large-scale 1936 urban protests, Thomas Russell, the Cairo Police Commandant, complained to then-Prime Minister ‘Ali Mahir about his restraint in using police force to discourage university students from protesting. His comments reveal a miscomprehension of the new era of mass politics emerging in Egypt, “If your excellency could find some method of legalizing quick and sharp corporal punishment for these children at the moment of arrest, student rioting would not lead to the inevitable mob rioting which has resulted in casualties and funerals.”<sup>42</sup> What Russell understands as chaotic behavior resulting from immaturity and containable by quick coercive violence, Hilmi now understands as well-organized and perpetual threat to the public security containable only by military-like precision — and, it is implied, indefinite detention under the state of siege.

Ironically enough, the paternalistic British attitude caused British administrators to delay adopting the state of the art in interwar crowd control technology — tear gas. Shoul argues convincingly that it was the British public’s instinctual opposition to using even non-lethal chemical gases, because of the millions of young British soldiers who died and still suffered from mustard and chlorine gases used in the First World War, that prevented the authorities from employing it against labor strikers or even in its colonies.<sup>43</sup> As a result, in the Amritsar Massacre and other large policing maneuvers, the British police relied on live ammunition, which led to far higher fatalities than if it had switched to tear gas. This doesn’t mean that the British weren’t studying the chemistry and tactics behind the most effective use of tear gas on civilians. In Egypt, the Ministry of Interior

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<sup>42</sup> DWQ 0081-024046, Russell to Ali Mahir, 12 Feb. 1936.

<sup>43</sup> Simeon Shoul, “British Tear Gas Doctrine Between the World Wars,” *War in History* 15:2 (2008), 169.

began tests in earnest, again during the 1935-36 wave of protests. While the consensus of the British officers was that the police should always be prepared to use gas (although never in “European areas”), Cairo Police Vice-Commandant Miralai F.D. Baker Bey seemed skeptical about its effectiveness:

It is little use employing gas unless the objective is worth while. The average demonstration in Cairo is a very fluid affair. It is only when schoolboys ensconce themselves inside their schools and throw stones from there that the objective can ever be considered stationary. The usefulness of lobbing grenades into a schoolyard seems questionable since the one idea of gas is to disperse and break up hostile mobs... What the police generally have to encounter is a group of 100 to 200 demonstrators who go merrily along until the first police lorry comes into view. There is then a general ‘sauve qui peut’ of the more timid members and perhaps a bout of stone throwing by the leaders. The police then get in amongst them and beat them up, and they all run away a few streets and proceed to throw the remainder of their ammunition at buses and trams, and break lamp glasses. Over and over again this process is repeated and it never varies whether it is riff-raff or students.<sup>44</sup>

Faced with more organized and disciplined political protesting as the 1940s progressed, the independent Egyptian Interior Ministry had no reservations in deploying tear gas, and the second edition of Hilmi’s textbook reviews its use and tactics. However, the general shortage of domestic munitions that so stymied the Egyptian army during the war and post-war austerity applied to the police as well. In particular because of the early British opposition to tear gas, American industries cornered the market in tear gas manufacture, but Egypt was short of dollars in the 1940s and had difficulty procuring supplies. The police therefore only started obtaining large stocks of gas directly from the United States in early 1952. The Free Officer coup in no way interrupted these sales.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> CO 323/1396/1 Ministry of the Interior, European Dept., Report on Tear Gas Experiments, Miralai F.D. Baker Bey, 1 Jan. 1936.

<sup>45</sup> USNARA, RG 84, Egypt 370.1 top secret, US Consul in Alexandria to State, a request for 1060 tear gas shells valued at \$10,541, 14 Jan. 1952. After the July coup, the coordinated Egyptian Ministry of Interior request expanded significantly to 100 tear gas guns, 4800 gas canisters of different types, 500 gas masks, in addition to 200 shotguns, 1000 submachine guns, 70,000 associated rounds of ammunition, 30 armored

Military tactics could only be one element of the ministry's new wartime urban security strategy. Containing urban political activity also required a more sophisticated understanding of what constituted that activity, as well as preventative engagement with political actors behind the scenes. The strong state of the historiography on the nationalist movement of the interwar period is a testament to the diversity of opinion and the promotional skill of these groups.<sup>46</sup> The political police intelligence reports reveal the Ministry of Interior's growing awareness of the interpenetration of differing ideologies across different student, religious, professional and political organizations. Despite the state of siege censorship and police powers, the Azhar and Cairo University students (particularly the Law and Education faculties) continued a constant roil of protest in favor of the King or against British occupation, or the general maladministration in government.<sup>47</sup> The Muslim Brotherhood, al-Shubban al-Muslimun (YMMA), and Misr al-Fatah (after 1940, the Islamic Nationalist Party), in addition to minor groups like Shabab Muhammad (Youth of Muhammad), Misr al-Hurra (Free Egypt) and Jam'iyat al-Islah al-Watani (The Society of National Reform), were constantly recruiting among these students.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, labor union activity was growing in proportion to the

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cars and other accoutrements. The Americans developed a smaller-scale plan in response. USNARA RG 84, Egypt 370.1 top secret, US Embassy to State, 6 Sept. 1952.

<sup>46</sup> See Israel Gershoni and James P. Jankowski, *Redefining the Egyptian Nation, 1930-1945* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) for the large variety in Eastern, Pan-Islamic and Egyptian-Islamist groupings and movements, Jankowski, *Young Egypt* as well for detail about the radical Misr Al-Fata party, Ellis Goldberg, *Tinker, Tailor, and Textile Worker: Class and Politics in Egypt, 1930-1952* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986) for the role of the Muslim Brotherhood in the labor movement, and Joel Beinin and Zachary Lockman, *Workers on the Nile: Nationalism, Communism, Islam, and the Egyptian Working Class, 1882-1954* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1987) on the trade union movement generally.

<sup>47</sup> Police intelligence cited public protests of more than 20 students on (at least) April 7, May 1, June 22, June 28 and December 17 in 1940 (DWQ 0073-005150 and 0073-005156), on Feb. 5, March 3, May 9, May 10, June 1, June 21 in 1941 (0073-005529, 0073-005213, 0073-005211, 0073-005214) and on Jan. 12, 15, 19, 20 and 23 continuously to Feb. 4 1942 (0073-005234).

<sup>48</sup> Free Egypt was an obscure protest movement from early 1941 (DWQ 0073-005211, Cairo Police Special Branch secret political reports 1117 June 10 and 1127 June 17). The Shabab Muhammad was led by an

rapid growth in the transportation, printing and textiles sectors, but many of these groups' members were frequently also members of nationalist organizations. In a few examples of associational political cross-pollenization, a raid staged on the apartment of two workers of the Egyptian State Railways print shop turned up a large amount of Misr al-Fatah propaganda in June 1941.<sup>49</sup> The veterinary branch of the Doctor's Syndicate contained several members of the Muslim Brotherhood and wished to hold an election for its representative to the leadership of the syndicate at the Brotherhood headquarters; the police report asks the commandant whether the police should oblige the veterinary doctors to hold it in a different location.<sup>50</sup> The secret police even kept very precise reports about the meetings of the Islamist groups that were open to the public and hosted by prominent public figures, like the Shubban al-Muslimin's celebration of Islamic New Year in Alexandria in January 1941, which was attended by Prince 'Umar Tusun, the governor and president of the municipality, and the head of the special branch of the police himself, Muhammad Khairy Pasha.<sup>51</sup>

The Wafd and the Palace both tried to cultivate alliances with the radical extra-parliamentary political groups at the same time that the security bureaucracy frowned on their official existence. The most familiar example from this era is the cultivation of pro-Palace politicians 'Ali Mahir, Saleh Harb and 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam of the Army, Islamist and youth groups in the late 1930s.<sup>52</sup> The Wafd also cultivated a youth party in

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Army Lieutenant Hussein Youssef, followed similar themes to the Muslim Brotherhood. See DWQ 0073-0005215 Cairo Police Special Branch secret political report 1 Mar. 1941, 0073-005234 Cairo Police Special Branch secret political report 9 Jan. 1942.

<sup>49</sup> DWQ 0073-005211, Cairo Police Special Branch secret political report 1103, 10 June 1941.

<sup>50</sup> DWQ 0073-005234, Cairo Police Special Branch secret political report, 13 Jan. 1942.

<sup>51</sup> DWQ 0073-005229, Alexandria Police Special Branch Secret Political Report 18 for 1981, 29 Jan. 1941.

<sup>52</sup> See Tripp, "Ali Maher and the Politics of the Egyptian Army"; Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*.

the 30s,<sup>53</sup> but its activities among the other radical groups in the 1940s and later is generally more obscure. The police records contain intelligence of repeated contacts between Ahmad Hussein and high-ranking Wafd members in 1940 that resulted in no particular commitments.<sup>54</sup> The tenuous alliance between the Wafd and the Muslim Brotherhood during its 1942-44 government was based on a doubly-disingenuous public promise that the Brotherhood would “stay out of politics.”<sup>55</sup> Of course, the Brotherhood continued building its organization and its charitable and religious-educational activities, but it redoubled its behind-the-scenes bargaining with nearly all political actors. The Wafd, on the other hand, hoped to acquire some of the Brotherhood’s political influence through these networks, to help them against their minority party rivals.

#### SOCIAL REFORM AS COMPETING RAISON D’ÉTAT

At the same time the Ministry of Interior was arming its police officers for urban war and holding parties with potential enemies, it was releasing some of its responsibilities to other offices. The sophistication of social science knowledge made the potential tasks of preventive government action in areas of social security beyond the capability of armed police. Timothy Mitchell has usefully highlighted the role of bureaucrats and scientists in regularizing and legitimating more sophisticated government intervention in Egyptian

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<sup>53</sup> Jankowski, *Young Egypt*.

<sup>54</sup> DWQ 0073-005150, Cairo Police Special Branch secret political reports: Ahmad Husayn met Makram ‘Ubayd on 4 Apr. 1940, Farid Za’aluk on 8 April and Mustafa al-Nahhas on 9 April and 24 April 1940.

<sup>55</sup> See Richard P. Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers* (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), 27-29, and Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, 268-269, for a discussion of the terms of this deal. Hassan al-Banna wanted to run for parliament in the March 1942 elections, but agreed to Mustafa al-Nahhas’ request that he not do so in exchange for al-Nahhas’ promise to allow the group to recruit openly and to crack down on prostitution and other forms of vice.

education, labor, health and reproduction.<sup>56</sup> Omnia El-Shakry has illustrated the increase in the number and importance of anthropological and sociological statistical studies on Egyptian population, health, hygiene and productivity in the interwar years.<sup>57</sup> Her book, *The Great Social Laboratory* tracks the rise and moderation of neo-Malthusian discourses typical of liberal critiques of population early in the century, through more intensive étatist solutions of land reclamation and state-run industry to employ Egyptians by the Nasser period. In effect, she argues the Egyptians were themselves finishing the job of “colonizing Egypt,” in ways that Britain’s more superficial rule had not.

Older forms of social protection and pacification, like politics, had occurred on the personal scale. Public and private charity long existed in many forms in Egypt. Religious institutions collected and administered the *zakat*, a charitable tithe and one of the five pillars of Islam, while wealthy families founded *waqfs*, trusts backed by land rents or other fixed property that funded charitable schools, water fountains or bakeries. Even in periods of strong central government, such as the Mamluk dynasties, the sultan’s charity took similar forms of personal aid and limited, local institution building.<sup>58</sup> The growth of a central state in the nineteenth century under the Muhammad Ali dynasty included a centralized system for policing, recording and assisting or excluding the poor based on more uniform classifications of need and deservedness.<sup>59</sup> Such initiatives suffered under the fiscal austerity Lord Cromer and the British residency imposed to pay

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<sup>56</sup> Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, ch. 1, 19-53, deals with business interests and the technocratic response to the malaria crisis during the Second World War. See Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Michel Foucault, Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), from Foucault’s 1978-79 lecture series for his original definition of the term.

<sup>57</sup> El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*.

<sup>58</sup> Adam Abdelhamid Sabra, *Poverty and Charity in Medieval Islam: Mamluk Egypt, 1250-1517* (Cambridge ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>59</sup> Mine Ener, *Managing Egypt’s Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2003), 26-38.



the state's debts starting in the 1880s, and like many other aspects of the Khedivial state, charitable services became effectively privatized. As Mine Ener demonstrated, the British (with sublimated irony) made the poor condition of charitable services one of the ideological elements justifying their informal occupation of Egypt.<sup>60</sup>

With increasing autonomy after the First World War, the Egyptian state budget began a halting expansion from LE 28 million per year in 1922-23 to LE 48 million in 1938-1939, thanks in part to the new tariff regime.<sup>61</sup> A significant portion of this sum went to improving Egypt's long-underfunded educational system, the poor state of which had long been a symbol to nationalists of British colonial exploitation.<sup>62</sup> Smaller portions went to developing Ministries of Agriculture, which made the first detailed surveys of land use and sponsored scientific studies to improve yield fertility, and Trade and Industry, which organized tariffs to encourage nascent import substitution industries, and Health, which sought to combat the endemic diseases of the countryside.

The fall of world agricultural prices at the onset of the Great Depression posed a significant threat to the Egyptian economy. This crisis further prompted the Egyptian government to regain controversial regulatory powers over domestic economic activity. One of Isma'il Sidqi's most popular acts among large landowners was his imposition of a new protectionist regime of tariffs.<sup>63</sup> The new regime in particular propped up the value of grain crops and mass consumer industrial products like textiles, food processing and construction materials. Creditors and large landlords were not as happy with Sidqi's

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<sup>60</sup> Ener, *Managing Egypt's Poor and the Politics of Benevolence, 1800-1952*, 95-98.

<sup>61</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Finance, *Annuaire Statistique*, 1924 and 1945. Wartime inflation makes subsequent budgets difficult to compare to prewar values.

<sup>62</sup> See Misako Ikeda, "Sociopolitical Debates in Late Parliamentary Egypt, 1944-1952," (Ph.D., Harvard University, 1998).

<sup>63</sup> Robert L. Tignor, *State, Private Enterprise, and Economic Change in Egypt, 1918-1952* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1984) 109-112. The last of the capitulatory international conventions fixing a low-level 8% ad valorem tariff for Egypt lapsed in February 1930.

decision to declare a one-time cancellation of some mortgage, tax and rent debts owed by smaller landholders and tenants. Although they helped prevent an overall collapse in economic confidence, Sidqi's new policies also operated to the detriment of the standard of living of all wage-earning workers and salaried employees, as prices remained high and unemployment rose. The urban roots of the protests leading to Sidqi's downfall and the "restoration of democracy" in the 1923 Constitution again demonstrated both the increasingly politicized nature of economic preferences, and the state's inability to make policies that mitigated the increase in urban inequality and urban social mobilization more generally.

If the Egyptian peasant, or fellah, had been a symbol of the goodness and authenticity of the national character to Egyptian nationalists since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, government administrators and scientists discovered, especially in the aftermath of the Great Depression, that the nationalist elite had ill-served the fellaheen in the past 50 years. After a long-term transfer of land, fueled by European mortgages, from the smaller peasantry to a European and Egyptian cotton growing agrarian bourgeoisie, Egypt's first economists and epidemiologists began to discover the negative social results of extreme wealth and income disparity. Eight million of 12 million rural residents were dispossessed wage laborers or renters, who made no more than 5 piasters for a day's work at a time when the price of one feddan of land (roughly an acre) cost LE 100 or more, 2,000 times this wage.<sup>64</sup> Many peasants, particularly in Upper Egypt, suffered

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<sup>64</sup> Mohamed Riad Ghonemy, "Resource Use and Income in Egyptian Agriculture Before and After the Land Reform With Particular Reference to Economic Development," (Ph.D., University of North Carolina, 1953), 72-76; Charles Issawi, *Egypt At Mid-Century: An Economic Survey* (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 124-131; Baer, *A History of Landownership*, 120-124.

from the parasite Bilharzia from unsanitary use of standing water in irrigation basins. More than 90 percent of the population was still illiterate in the 1940s.<sup>65</sup>

Since the 1919 revolution, British administrators had treated peasant unrest not merely as a nuisance to business as usual, but as an existential threat. A series of panicked memoranda during the agricultural crises of 1933 requested a stronger police presence in the countryside where “public security is at present worse than it has ever been since I can remember. Murders, arson, theft with violence... are being committed all over the country in broad daylight. The financial state of the fellah is appalling - hence the increase in crime & making crime a necessity in order to live.”<sup>66</sup> There was an objective upswing in the number of communal peasant protests against landlords, tax collectors and politicians in the early 1930s.<sup>67</sup> By the Second World War, under the influence of the increasing government intervention in education and other social services, officials of the Ministry of Interior were expanding the purview of public security to more ambitious goals, such as mandatory housekeeping and hygiene education for women, the provision of clean water and even the wholesale reconstruction of targeted villages.<sup>68</sup> The rise of separate bureaucracies to handle different aspects of state intervention into rural society did not imply that these problems lost their status as public security concerns, but the intensification of resources did cause new liberal dilemmas over the right amount of intervention and the results obtained for the investment of capital and effort.

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<sup>65</sup> Amy J. Johnson, *Reconstructing Rural Egypt: Ahmed Hussein and the History of Egyptian Development* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 49.

<sup>66</sup> FO 141/723/19 Smart to Larkin, “Economic Situation and State of Public Security in Egypt,” 9 Oct. 1933.

<sup>67</sup> Nathan J. Brown, *Peasant Politics in Modern Egypt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 137-139.

<sup>68</sup> FO 141/919, Mukhtar Bey to Walter Smart, 5 July 1943.

Another important factor leading to the diversification and expansion of social policy in the interwar Egyptian government was the dissemination of the new social scientific and compassionate reform discourse in Egypt's mass media. This was essential to the transformation of rural reform into an important political issue discussed across the ideological spectrum, from liberals to Islamists and communists.<sup>69</sup> Through the 1930s, the mainstream liberal media consolidated the rallying trope of the "social problem" to a fight against "poverty, disease and ignorance," and numerous magazine and newspaper articles appeared addressing solutions to one or all three of these problems, usually in rural areas.<sup>70</sup> In many cases, popular media seemed open to ideas. *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya* investigated a village in 1944 in which a wealthy benefactor was helping his tenants experiment with common ownership of food, services and agricultural inputs: *Al-Ithnayn* made it sensational with the headline "A Village on the Way to Socialism."<sup>71</sup> Sayyid Qutb, who was a young modernist before becoming the notorious thinker of Jihadi Islamism in the 1960s, posed the problem in a more transcendental fashion: "Social Consciousness is more important than Social Reform."<sup>72</sup> Meanwhile, nationwide charities, some sponsored by members of the royal family, made huge strides in the 1940s on popular issues like the fight against malaria in Upper Egypt.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, 207-209. See also the communist Ahmad Šādiq Sa'īd, *Mushkilat Al-Fallaḥ* (Cairo: Dār al-Qarn al-ʿIshrin, 1945).

<sup>70</sup> Aḥmad Gamāl Ad-Dīn, *Thalāth ʿAqabāt Fīl-Ṭarīq Ilāl-Majd* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibāʿa wa-l-Nashr al-Islāmī, 1945), for example, is a contemporary full-book treatment of social reform structured around these three issues.

<sup>71</sup> "A Village on the Way to Socialism," *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, 24 April 1944.

<sup>72</sup> "Social Consciousness is more important than Social Reform," Ministry of Social Affairs Magazine, August 1942.

<sup>73</sup> Chapter 3, "Elite Women and King Farouk to the Rescue," Nancy Elizabeth Gallagher, *Egypt's Other Wars: Epidemics and the Politics of Public Health* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1990), 40-55.



concedes the political aspect of the consolidation of these activities played an important role in their ultimate form, citing what Robert Bianchi argued “signaled the first attempt to bolster authoritarianism by sponsoring a legitimist set of interest groups and creating the illusion of a modern welfare state.”<sup>75</sup>

These views need not be contradictory. I argue that the Ministry of Social Affairs was rather a step towards a more sophisticated form of liberal security through real welfare programs. British memoranda dating to the transfer of authority in the Ministry of Interior after 1936 reveal the extent to which the Social Affairs Ministry cobbled together several orphan offices of the government’s agricultural bureaucracy with some that had been the responsibility of the Ministry of Interior’s department of public security.<sup>76</sup> These included the peasant, or “fellah” department, which began building rural health and farm educational centers, a department to monitor and promote rural cooperatives and credit unions, and departments to monitor the activities of charities, newspapers, labor unions and other new civic associations and professional syndicates, which had previously been under the control of the Ministry of Interior. Under Wafd Social Affairs Minister ‘Abd al-Hamid ‘Abd al-Haq, this ministry bureaucracy began officially patronizing the Muslim Brotherhood (as well as the labor unions; I continue this subject in Chapter 5). The Muslim Brotherhood magazine proudly reported the visit of ‘Abd al-al-Haq and Agriculture Minister Fu’ad Sirag Ad-Din, Supply Minister Ahmad Hamza and a group of other senators and deputies to the group’s headquarters in June 1943 (to repair relations after a period of conflict between the Wafd and the Brotherhood), in which 1,000

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<sup>75</sup> Johnson, *Reconstructing Rural Egypt*, 55; Robert Bianchi, *Unruly Corporatism: Associational Life in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 72.

<sup>76</sup> FO 371/41380, J 2671/369/16, “Report by Mr. T.E. Evans... on Conditions of Labour and Trade Unions in Egypt,” 28 July, 1944.

members and the Wafd politicians made the sunset prayer together.<sup>77</sup> Hasan al-Banna delivered a speech on the occasion in which he said, “Our position and our *da‘wa* (call) is not much different from yours. Indeed, our branch in ‘Abu Girgis is next door to the Ministry of Social Affairs branch there, and it has been kind to encourage the activities of our members there. So it is not strange that the Brotherhood would want to return the assistance.”

I consider the elaborations of the government interventions examined above a “liberal” security regime because they were formatted on the principle of securing private ownership and freedoms of association and speech foremost, but they sought to go beyond the formerly repressive mode of Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Social Affairs provided services productive of an expansion of peasant property ownership, education in “correct” forms of knowledge, or the incorporation of alternative nationalist views in a “big tent” Egyptian nationalism. The division of labor into these social programs increased confidence in the intentions of the bureaucrats carrying them out, while at the same time improving the quality of knowledge and cooperation of the subjects of this knowledge. These programs also prepared the government for intervention in the countryside during the war, when agricultural shortages necessitated emergency economic programs culminating in the wholesale requisition of wheat and maize starting in 1942.

Ahmed Hussein and the peasant department of the Ministry of Social Affairs became the public, humanitarian face of the ministry over the course of the 1940s, but the labor and cooperative wings of the department each had bigger impacts during the war as

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<sup>77</sup> “The Ministers Visit the Muslim Brotherhood Headquarters,” *Muslim Brotherhood Magazine*, 12 June 1943, 3-6.

conduits of information, and each provided new resources and new options to distinct segments of the rural and urban population. The ministry, then, epitomized the contradictions of Egyptian liberalism — the promise of better work opportunities or improved living conditions to mold more equal Egyptian subjects consonant with populist claims, combined with sharper surveillance on the spread of labor unionism and small peasant complaints that a landlord or industrial magnate could come to respect. Most importantly, these bureaucracies took on a material existence and followed political projects not entirely coterminous with the political interests that had constituted them.

## CONCLUSION

In the interwar period, Egypt underwent an internal struggle to determine the role the state would play in interacting with and managing society in all its productive aspects. The fragmentation of Egypt into political interest groups reflected the way the state was beginning to divide these same groups, co-opt them or address their issues in an atomistic fashion. Egypt's bureaucratic concern with exercising sovereignty over its territory, therefore, emerged at the same time that the entire world was rethinking the relationship of the nation state to its productive capacity as "an economy."

The crisis of war, coming as perhaps the crowning moment of this transformation, was the context in which Egyptian liberals adopted an ideology of security to define and defend a state of étatist and welfare modernism. Many leading politicians and a growing wing of the effendi intelligentsia promoted this ideology throughout the government bureaucracy and in the mass media during and after the war. The war certainly stoked the virulence of nationalist opposition to continued British occupation, the explosion of



which in 1946 is a well-recorded feature of late-colonial Egyptian history.<sup>78</sup> But the government's response to the war itself and its tectonic changes to the landscape of world politics also changed the character of Egyptian nationalists' ideologies and goals regarding the state. Despite criticism of the questionable legal methods of the security state, there was popular support for the idea that the Egyptian state should move towards greater sovereignty in its internal policing and to provide better services to the poor. This perspective refocuses the traditional concern of the study of late-colonial politics and nationalism on the origins of postcolonial authoritarianism towards a more total cultural and political-economic reconciliation of liberalism to these new conditions.

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<sup>78</sup> Tāriq Bishrī, *Al-Ḥarakah Al-Siyāsīyah Fī Miṣr, 1945-1952* (Cairo: Dār Al-Shurūq, 1972).

## Chapter II

### The State of Siege

#### Exception as a Parallel Legal Institution

*“Military Governor or... Prime Minister?”*

During a parliament debate about the Suez Canal bond issue, several speakers referred to Husayn Sirri Pasha, saying, "...but his excellency the President of the Council of Ministers issued a military proclamation," whereupon his excellency [Sirri] stopped him to say: "Military Governor, if you please."

So the speaker continued, "...but the Military Governor, when he is asked a question at the council of ministers," and Sirri Pasha interrupted him again and said "use 'president of the council of ministers,' please."

The deputies present laughed and the speaker, Tawfiq Duss Pasha, said, "Military Governor, President of the Council of Ministers — they're the same thing!"<sup>1</sup>

National politics in interwar Egypt was defined by a binary struggle between bourgeois politicians, who defended the 1923 constitution and the legal rights and electoral institutions it guaranteed, and the king and the British, who sought to undermine or often simply ignore or replace the constitution or its guarantees. However, the conservative politicians who drafted and defended this constitution built a subtle institution into it that could allow enhanced executive power to politicians and bureaucrats without suspending it: *L'État de Siège*. (In Arabic legislation, the state used *al-ahkām al-ʿurfīyya*, which is closer in meaning to "martial law;" in English, I will use "the state of siege"). Intended to be activated in times of war or internal emergency, the state of siege was not intended to suspend electoral democracy. Rather, it created a set of institutions parallel to it with completely separate legislative, executive and judiciary functions. As illustrated in the

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<sup>1</sup> A boxed news item in *Al-Ithnayn wal Dunya*, 3 March 1941, 7.

vignette above, the Prime Minister assumed an ambiguous position as executive officer of both the civilian government and of state of siege institutions. In practice, under the continued coercive power of the British military occupation, these distinctions blurred.

This chapter introduces the ways the state of siege transformed the Egyptian executive and legal systems as a consequence of the Second World War, and how it emerged in and affected public political discourse. The British leadership had paid little attention to the inclusion of a state of siege clause during the drafting of the 1923 constitution, assuming it could continue to use British martial law at its discretion, as it had done during the First World War. After the Egyptian parliament passed the state of siege in 1939, the British embassy found that the strong new boundaries the state of siege raised between Egyptian and British authority instead suited British war aims. The state of siege gave Egyptian prime ministers the power to restrict free speech, intern civilians at will, and eventually to commandeer the Egyptian economy to guarantee the civilian food supply. It also allowed them to institute by proclamation progressive social policies that political party and royal interference had blocked since the 1920s. Moreover, the state of siege gave the Egyptian government limited criminal and civil jurisdiction over all foreign residents for the first time in several centuries.

In the process, emergency legislation and exceptional courts became a routine element of Egyptian state administration, but without a charismatic and unitary executive wielding transcendental power. The prime minister still had to answer to the King, the British and the parliament, and so his personal political capital often affected his range of options within the state of siege. Like any new legislation, it also shifted the rules for political participation, business development and profit and personal rights and

obligations, prompting new social strategies of resistance and collaboration among Egyptian subjects. The widespread view that the Second World War was a transformative time for the world and the Egyptian state promoted the educated middle-class *effendiyya* public's conditional adaptation to this new legal regime rather than its outright rejection of it. When in the opposition, politicians and parties attacked governing ministries' abuses of the state of siege, but no broad coalition arose to oppose the state of siege as a legal concept or institution integral to the liberal legal system. As a result, I argue this long-term exceptional use of state power by the Egyptian government allowed the shared British and Egyptian objective of public security and order to become a defining characteristic of Egyptian sovereignty in the final years of its nationalist movement for independence.

#### THE ORIGINS OF THE STATE OF SIEGE

The British had never positively decided the form they wished their power to assume vis-a-vis the Egypt government after the First World War. These aims were an endless source of controversy since the start of the protectorate in negotiations between the Foreign and Colonial offices, the Military, and with the capitulatory parties. Most important to the Egyptians was drawing the state of martial law to a close. It had continued for more than a year after Allenby's declaration of independence because of the possibility of an Egyptian legal reprisal against the exceptional arrests and expropriations the British took under martial law.<sup>2</sup> The British finally ended martial law on July 5, 1923, when the interim Egyptian government passed a bill of indemnity for all British actions during the

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<sup>2</sup> Tharwat was even compelled to deny newspaper rumors that British martial law was ending prior to this. DWQ 0075-030442, Memo, Council of Ministers, October N/D, 1922.

prior nine years. This diplomatic failure was the occasion for soul searching in the British foreign service. In defending the idea that Egypt and Britain had always shared sovereignty during the protectorate, British legal advisor Sir Maurice Amos claimed in 1925 that “it was, from the legal point of view, an irrelevant accident that the claim to ancillary sovereignty made by the British Government bore the name of martial law.”<sup>3</sup> He had made an earlier, more telling comment privately to another Foreign Office employee: “Martial Law of course is doomed. But were it not for its unsavoury name and for its political implications, it may well be supposed that the Egyptian government will soon learn to regret its disappearance.”<sup>4</sup>

Amos could have read the minutes of the constituent assembly writing the 1923 Constitution as proof that no regret would be necessary. Despite their intransigence towards the British, once empowered to draft the constitution, Prime Minister ‘Abd al-Khaliq Tharwat and the conservative elite who were shortly to become the Liberal Constitutionalist party chose to include an article allowing the King to declare a state of siege based on the French *État de Siège* laws of 1848 and 1878. French emergency legislation had evolved over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from provisions suspending Republican rights and liberties in cities actually under military siege by an attacking force during the Napoleonic Wars into a “fictive” state of siege, after the 1848 revolution, that could be applied to the entire country in times of social turmoil. Early in the Third Republic, a newly strengthened parliament adjusted the code in 1878 in response to its

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<sup>3</sup> FO 141/672/1 attachment: M.S. Amos, “Martial Law in Egypt, 1914-1923” (Reading, The Eastern Press: 1925).

<sup>4</sup> FO 141/672/1, Amos to Kerr, 24 March 1923.

abuse by Napoleon III and interim governments before the constitution of 1875.<sup>5</sup> Unlike the traditions of martial law in British common law, which suspended the legislature and allowed the executive to rule by decree, the state of siege in theory existed in parallel with all the constitutional legislative and judicial institutions. Not only did parliament continue to sit and pass laws during a state of siege, as well as provide a check on abuses of state of siege authorities, but the civil law judicial system also operated as usual. However, all infractions, military and civilian, of the proclamations pursuant to the state of siege fell automatically to the jurisdiction of separate military courts, without rights of a punctual trial, habeas corpus or appeal. From the perspective of the early 1920s, the state of siege had been an important help to the French war effort, of which Egyptian lawyers and the political elite were keenly aware. While the French military courts often exceeded the letter of the legislation at the beginning of the First World War, harshly penalizing public criticism of the government and infringements of rationing, less draconian measures were necessary as the military courts became better integrated into the security apparatus of the home front. Significantly, the French state of siege legislation contained time limits and other mechanisms that allowed normal constitutional life to resume shortly after the end of the war.<sup>6</sup>

Interestingly, the constituent assembly of the 1923 Constitution legislated the state of siege with a French legal structure while retaining the spirit of the style of power that British military governors had recently exercised during the First World War. The assembly had difficulty writing a state of siege clause (Article 45) with as many

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<sup>5</sup> Clinton Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship: Crisis Government in the Modern Democracies* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1948), 84.

<sup>6</sup> Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship*, 94. However, the remainder of the French Third Republic was plagued by many other undemocratic emergency measures besides the state of siege.

safeguards as the French constitution. The chairman of the assembly, Husayn Rushdi, was obsessed with accommodating King Fu'ad so that the king would not reject the assembly's work outright. Kedourie argues this is one of the reasons why the constitution provided so little protection for parliament.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly, it was a young 'Ali Mahir, who would be the first Military Governor in the Second World War, who argued strongly in the assembly's debates for French-style time limits to the state of siege. But the majority overruled him.<sup>8</sup> Mahir did succeed in pushing for parliamentary oversight of the beginning of the state of siege, and for a guarantee (Article 155) that parliament would continue to exist during the state of siege.<sup>9</sup> These decisions would cause Mahir no small amount of political anxiety when he engaged in such a political struggle with parliament as Prime Minister in 1939.

A final factor in the ultimate success of the state of siege as a purely Egyptian institution was the important precedent British and Egyptian administrators set in their preparations for war during the 1935 Abyssinian crisis. The British, in the midst of the negotiations that would lead to the 1936 treaty, initially thought a joint British Martial Law and Egyptian State of Siege could satisfy both parties of control in their respective spheres. However, the Foreign Office and military backed away from this plan by November 1935, in part because of the strong nationalist sentiment at the time, and decided to allow the Egyptian state to control the state of siege (and the military courts established under it), with close diplomatic surveillance.<sup>10</sup> The Anglo-Egyptian treaty formalized this settlement. As the state of siege was designed to function seamlessly

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<sup>7</sup> Kedourie, "The Genesis of the Egyptian Constitution of 1923", 353.

<sup>8</sup> Muhammad al-Sharif, *'Ala Hamish al-Dustur*, (Cairo, 1937), 216.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 216, 592.

<sup>10</sup> FO 371/19053, "Eventual Emergency Measures in Egypt," Captain Godfrey to Campbell, 11 Nov. 1935.

within the constitution, Egyptian Prime Ministers using the extra powers it provided successfully demonstrated their commitment to the constitution itself. This would help later to neutralize criticisms of the state of siege from opposition parties.

## DIPLOMACY AND THE STATE OF SIEGE

After three years of spiraling Nazi aggression and Allied appeasement, the “apprehended emergency” the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of Alliance so presciently legislated arrived in August 1939. The exact nature of the crisis and the measures required of Egypt were not clear in the first year of the war, because Italy remained neutral until the next summer. The British embassy, military and Egyptian cabinet eventually hammered out the rights, responsibilities and avenues for bargaining within the bounds of the state of siege over the course of the war. The British diplomatic record reveals British officials’ uncritical belief in their hegemony over Egyptians in matters of public security, which resulted in a limited attention span in bargaining. The only apparent acknowledgement of the increased powers that the state of siege put in the hands of the Egyptian government and prime minister in particular came in the increasing brinksmanship in their diplomatic relationship that culminated in political crises over the position of the prime minister. Through it all, the Egyptians insisted on the inviolability of their executive power over the state of siege and British Ambassador Sir Miles Lampson (despite his own struggles for control with Prime Ministers) defended this state of affairs against all comers, usually the British military, but also the Americans, British politicians and other European diplomats.



The British Embassy wrote to ‘Ali Mahir on August 24, 1939 to invoke article seven of the Treaty in a request to increase British troop levels and for Egypt to declare a state of siege.<sup>11</sup> Article seven stipulated in open-ended terms that if either party went to war, the other would “immediately come to his aid in the capacity of an ally.” However, the concluding paragraph of the article betrayed the fact that the only likely scenario was Egyptian aid in a British war:

“The aid of His Majesty the King of Egypt in the event of war, imminent menace of war or apprehended international emergency will consist in furnishing to His Majesty The King and Emperor on Egyptian territory, in accordance with the Egyptian system of administration and legislation, all the facilities and assistance in his power, including the use of his ports, aerodromes and means of communication. It will accordingly be for the Egyptian Government to take all the administrative and legislative measures, including the establishment of martial law and an effective censorship, necessary to render these facilities and assistance effective.”<sup>12</sup>

Mahir replied on August 27 assuring Lampson that the Egyptian government would not only provide the contractual support through the state of siege, but also that the political establishment was loyal to the British cause.<sup>13</sup> ‘Ali Mahir and King Faruq issued the declaration of the state of siege on September 2, the day after Germany invaded Poland. Under pressure from Lampson, Mahir promised by telegram to “synchronize” Egypt’s additional declaration of war with Britain’s on Germany the next day.<sup>14</sup> However, by the next morning, Mahir reported to Lampson that after a long meeting with his council of ministers, he could not convince them to unanimously support the declaration of war, because of their fears of an aerial attack on Egypt; he

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<sup>11</sup> FO 371/23368, J 3345, Bateman to Ali Mahir (attachment), 24 Aug. 1939.

<sup>12</sup> Treaty of Alliance between His Majesty, in respect of the United Kingdom, and His Majesty the King of Egypt, 26 August 1936. London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1937.

<sup>13</sup> FO 371/23368, J 3457, ‘Ali Mahir to Lampson, 27 Aug. 1939.

<sup>14</sup> FO 371/23369, J 3671, Mahir to Lampson, 2 Sep. 1939 attached to Lampson to FO, 12 Sep. 1939. Britain had desired an uncoerced declaration of war from an ally for the demonstration effect on the world perception of British imperial morale, particularly because commonwealth states and crown colonies like India were obliged or forced into belligerency.



Figure 2.1. A royalist take on the war and its protagonists. Left: Prime Minister 'Ali Maher, as the new military governor, prepares to fight the Axis on his own terms. Right: Meanwhile, in a surreal two-way Mad magazine-like caricature, opposition Wafd party leader Mustafa al-Nahas melts into John Bull. *Ruz Al-Yusuf Magazine*, September 2, 1939.

claimed he did not want to declare war without their full support.<sup>15</sup> The Foreign Office and Lampson were particularly insistent on Egypt's declaration of war because they did not yet believe that the Egyptian state of siege would allow Egypt to take all necessary measures against German interests in the country. In an embassy meeting on September 4 with 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam, Minister of Waqfs and Mahir's political right-hand man, it became clear that 'Azzam was the chief opponent of the declaration of war, both because it lacked popular support and, he admitted, because it "favours too much a return of dictation by Great Britain."<sup>16</sup> However, 'Azzam also advanced the first vision of building the Egyptian state of siege into a complete compromise: he argued it could provide all the beneficial support for the British without any of the drawbacks of making

<sup>15</sup> FO 371/23368 Lampson to FO, J3518, 3 Sep. 1939.

<sup>16</sup> FO 371/23368 Lampson to FO, J3550, 4 Sep. 1939.

Egypt a belligerent state. ‘Ali Mahir initially made good on the first element of this argument by using the state of siege to suspend relations with Germany and expelling the German diplomatic mission immediately, then banning trade with Germany, sequestering German property, and mandating registration for all German subjects between September 15 and 19.

The potential for reprisal against the 43 Egyptian students and diplomats under internment in Germany evolved into Egypt’s next excuse for not declaring war or physically interning the entire German community. This situation helped transform the issue of Egypt’s belligerency into an internal debate between British diplomats and generals. The War Office could not tolerate the number of Germans left at large in Egypt, or Egypt’s desire to trade Germans they considered dangerous for the Egyptians in Germany. Moreover, General Archibald Wavell, then the commander of the British Middle East Forces, protested to Lampson that leaving the 33 “dangerous” Germans in Egyptian custody might result in their escape or their trade. Wavell used this as an excuse either for forcibly removing the Germans, or even declaring British martial law to enforce measures of importance to the British army. Despite Lampson’s own struggles for control over Egyptian politics, he could not tolerate the destruction of his own delicate tools of diplomacy, complaining to the Foreign Office that Wavell “obviously regards Egyptian independence as a joke that can be completely disregarded with no ill effects.”<sup>17</sup> In the uncertain period before the Italian declaration of war, these military demands increased further. In a complaint about the lenient treatment of alleged Italian spies, Wavell demanded Lampson force “(a) the issue of a Proclamation under Etat de Siege authorising Military Courts to inflict the death sentence for offences against the state,

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<sup>17</sup> FO371/23369, J 3736, DV Kelly, “Egyptian Relations with Germany,” 15 Sep. 1939.

including espionage and sabotage. (b) that all persons arrested for offences against the British Forces... should be handed over to the British Military authorities for trial.”<sup>18</sup>

Lampson replied that new proclamations in the state of siege would criminalize espionage in military courts, but that “the best course would be to carry on with Egyptian État de Siège as long as possible, until, in fact, it broke down;” he reminded Wavell that the military zones set up in the cities and western desert would become areas of British jurisdiction in case civil order broke down.<sup>19</sup>

The Italians entered the war after the fall of France in June 1940, a moment of great weakness for the Allies. ‘Ali Mahir therefore made every effort to remain officially neutral, withdrawing the Egyptian army from the Libyan border and issuing a promise not to retaliate even as he cut diplomatic relations with Italy.<sup>20</sup> But despite the diplomatic blow this episode represented for the Foreign Office, the War Office had already changed its policy against an Egyptian declaration of war, principally because of its increasing belief in the unreliability of the Egyptian army. In early 1940, the British Military Mission to the Egyptian army reported to the War Office and the Egyptians their estimations that the Egyptian military was not going to reach its targets for expansion from roughly 12,000 men in 1937 to 56,000 men by 1942. The army had expanded only to 20,000 to date, of whom barely 5,000 were fully armed and equipped. The British were facing severe limitations in arming any more men, and Egyptian munitions manufacturing was still in the planning phase.<sup>21</sup> In a subsequent attack on Sallum at the Libyan border in September 1940, the Foreign Office considered Egyptian reticence to

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<sup>18</sup> FO 371/24633, J 1409, Wavell to Lampson, 19 April 1940.

<sup>19</sup> FO 371/24633, J 1409, Lampson to Wavell, 27 April 1940.

<sup>20</sup> This hedging provoked the British to threaten the King to remove ‘Ali Mahir, although his successor did not follow an outwardly different policy. Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*, 38-39.

<sup>21</sup> DWQ 0076-000216 Memo: “The formation and condition of the Egyptian Army.” 1 April 1940.

declare war to be “absurd,” but Lampson reported that the service chiefs in the Middle East Command declared that “at present the balance of the advantage lies in Egypt not declaring war.”<sup>22</sup> Even during heightened Axis threat in the Eastern Mediterranean in April 1941, when thousands of British troops in Egypt were sent to fight in Greece, the British Military leadership had firmly settled on an attitude that the Egyptian military should remain away from the front on supply and internal security duties only.<sup>23</sup> The symbolic aspect of Egypt declaring war at this point was much less important to the Foreign Office than at the beginning of the war. At the same time, the intensification of state of siege punishments and completion of their application to the Italian community satisfied the British military that the Egyptian government could uphold their basic security prerogatives.

#### THE PARLIAMENTARY REACTION

The British hoped that they would escape political controversy by allowing Egypt to remain non-belligerent, but Egypt’s unruly legislature quickly brought the state of siege itself to a referendum. On September 23, 1939, in accordance with articles 45 and 155 of the constitution, Faruq called an extraordinary session of parliament for both houses to debate and ratify the decision to declare the state of siege. The lower house, the Chamber of Deputies (*Majlis al-Nuwwab*) met on October 2. The Wafd government had fallen since promulgating the 1936 treaty. The party had boycotted another election in 1938 and so only a small remnant of party members plus certain independent deputies led the opposition to the measure. As the ranking Wafdist member of the sub-committee tasked

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<sup>22</sup> FO 371/24634, J2015, G.H. Thompson internal memo, 30 September 1940.

<sup>23</sup> FO 371/27483, J966, Lampson to FO, 14 April 1941.

to the state of siege, ‘Abd al-Hamid ‘Abd al-Haq delivered a long argument against the state of siege in full session. (Interestingly, ‘Abd al-Haq would become one of the most enthusiastic partisans of worker’s rights as Wafd Minister of Social Affairs in 1942, and used the state of siege to threaten industry owners to pay mandatory pay bonuses, among other uses.)

‘Abd al-Haq’s first and principal argument against ratification related to the specific form it took, namely concentrating all extraordinary powers in the hands of ‘Ali Mahir. He argued that paragraph 12 of article 3 of the state of siege law contained logic that forbade the prime minister from holding the office of military governor (legislated as “the authority in charge of the state of siege”): “It is incumbent upon the Council of Ministers to limit the powers attributed above to the authority in charge of the state of siege or to authorize it to take any other measures which may be necessary for the maintenance of public security and order in all or a part of the territory declared to be in state of siege.”<sup>24</sup>

‘Abd al-Haq argued that there would be no way that the council of ministers could effectively supervise a “military governor” that was also its chairman, the Prime Minister, particularly because the council itself decided whether and when to end the state of siege. He pointed out that the explanatory note appended to the law in 1923 explicitly suggested that a high-ranking officer, governor or *mudir* (rural state executive officer) would be an appropriate choice. His back-up argument was a bolder call to scrap the state of siege altogether, based on the contradiction between the Anglo-Egyptian treaty and the law. While the treaty implied all measures should be taken even in an “implied international emergency,” article one of the law states the state of siege may be declared only when

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<sup>24</sup> *Maḍabīṭ Majlis al-Nuwwab (Parliamentary Record)*, 11 October 1939, 70.

“public security or order is threatened ... either by the threat of invasion by enemy armed forces or by internal disturbances.” “Thank God,” ‘Abd al-Haq said, “neither of these events has yet come to pass.”<sup>25</sup>

Ibrahim ‘Abd al-Hadi, the minister of state for parliamentary affairs (an office ‘Ali Mahir had presciently created), made the rebuttal for the government; his arguments establish two important tropes that would become mainstays of official discourse about the state of siege. Regarding the appointment of the military governor, just as there was nothing requiring the prime minister to take on that role, ‘Abd al-Hadi argued that there was nothing in the law that prevented it either. He cleverly played to his audience arguing that the prime minister was the best man to hold the position, since “rather than parliament directing the military governor at a distance of two degrees, with the council of ministers as mediators... the prime minister is responsible before it directly.”<sup>26</sup> This is a reference to parliament’s ability to remove the prime minister with a vote of no confidence, although it never once did this before the 1923 Constitution was abrogated.<sup>27</sup> Despite this fact, ‘Abd al-Hadi even accused ‘Abd al-Haq of a lack of faith in the constitution when the latter protested that parliament’s supervision of the government was merely “theoretical.”

More significantly, ‘Abd al-Hadi denied that the Anglo-Egyptian treaty had infringed Egyptian sovereignty. In 1914, the institution of martial law had facilitated the alienation of Egypt from the Ottoman state and its power remained solely in the hands of a British military governor. In the present case, he argued “the state of siege was imposed

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 72.

<sup>26</sup> *Parliamentary Record*, 11 October 1939, 77

<sup>27</sup> Afaf Lutfi Al-Sayyid Marsot, *A History of Egypt: From the Arab Conquest to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 98-99.

in the *name of Egyptian sovereignty*, and it is improper to compare (the two situations)” (my emphasis).<sup>28</sup> The declaration of the state of siege upheld a bilateral contract that both parties had freely entered into as discrete and independent nation-states. More importantly, ‘Abd al-Hadi argued, the state of siege is an action that *only* Egypt’s leadership can take to defend itself from the various and unforeseen effects of a world-wide crisis.<sup>29</sup> The majority of deputies were either opposed to the Wafdist position or genuinely convinced of the seriousness of the emergency and the government’s commitment to its treaty, and the measure passed by general acclaim on October 11.

As a partially appointed body with longer terms, the upper house of parliament or senate (*Majlis al-Shuyukh*) still held a much larger contingent of Wafdist or sympathetic politicians. After the Shuyukh sub-committee rejected the measure five to three, Mahir and Lampson conferred about a fool-proof way to pass the state of siege: simply ignore the Senate. “The claim is that this can constitutionally be done on the grounds that a Ministry depends for its parliamentary support only on the chamber of deputies,” Lampson wrote.<sup>30</sup> The British felt that ‘Abd al-Hamid Badawi, the long-standing head of the Government Legal Office (*Idarat Qaḍaya al-Hukūma* or *Contentieux*), would interpret the constitution in a way favorable to the royalist government. The President of the Senate informed the British prior to the final vote that in the case it was rejected, an official interpretation of article 45 that *both houses* must vote to cancel the state of siege decree would be read to the chamber, to the effect that the state of siege would remain in

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<sup>28</sup> *Parliamentary Record*, 11 October 1939, 77. In 1951, eminent anti-imperialist historian ‘Abd al-Rahman Al-Rafi‘i would argue that Second World War-era state of siege was better for Egyptian society than the First World War British Martial Law, by definition, because the Egyptians were in control, ‘Abd al-Rahmān. al-Rāfi‘ī, *Fī A‘qāb Al-Thawrah Al-Miṣrīyah: Thawrat Sanat 1919*, Vol. 3 (al-Qāhirah: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1987), 80.

<sup>29</sup> *Parliamentary Record*, 11 October 1939, 88.

<sup>30</sup> FO 371/23370, J 4147, Lampson, “War Policy of Egyptian Government, 13 Oct. 1939.



force.<sup>31</sup> However, the senate approved the state of siege by a vote of 68 to 59, ending the extraordinary session on October 16, and no irregular measure ended up being necessary.

## THE STATE OF SIEGE IN PRACTICE

The Wafdists need not have worried about the Prime Minister becoming an instant dictator along the lines of Hitler or Mussolini when they exploited state of emergency legislation to seize unlimited executive power in Germany and Italy, respectively. Those leaders were both backed by massive popular movements and did not have colonial occupations curbing their military and diplomatic independence. In contrast, Egyptian prime ministers used their powers under the state of siege as one more source of political capital, granting services to the British or to the opposition in exchange for concessions in other areas. The most remarkable aspect of the state of siege, therefore, was its tactical evolution over the course of the war, growing and changing to suit the needs of the Egyptian government and Allied military year by year. Beyond automatically activating a range of police powers, the state of siege granted new legislative and judicial powers that the prime ministers crafted to suit their ends.<sup>32</sup>

It was not a new development during the monarchic period for the executive wing of the state to exercise significant legislative powers. An important cause of political strife under the 1923 constitution was its provision for the king to pass decree-laws while parliament was in recess, usually from August to November. Prime ministers allied with

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<sup>31</sup> FO 371/23370, J 4160, DV Kelly memorandum, 15 October 1939.

<sup>32</sup> Al-Rafi'i briefly notes the various ways Wafd politicians and lawyers manipulated the state of siege to gain power and financial rewards, al-Rāfi'ī, *Fī A'qāb Al-Thawrah Al-Miṣrīyah: Thawrat Sanat 1919*, 122-123. Ramadan, typically more sympathetic to the Wafd, deems the Wafd continuation of the state of siege was not necessary to their staying in power, because of their broad popularity. He also claims that it had no effect on the long-term political life of the country, Ramaḍān, *Taṭawwur Al-Ḥarakah Al-Waṭanīyah*, 219-229.

the king could achieve a great deal this way; although parliament had the power to cancel this legislation by majority, by inertia and obstructionism, many controversial laws remained in place.<sup>33</sup> Regardless of its origin, all legislation until this point had been promulgated in the name of the King. The innovation of the state of siege, as it expanded, was that more and more legislation was signed in the name of the prime minister alone as military governor. The King still had the power to appoint and remove prime ministers, although in practice this power was restricted by political factors — principally British preference. It was not within the scope of the state of siege, however, for the prime minister to authorize legislation changing his basic relationship to the king. However, prime ministers found it possible to issue proclamations that progressively expanded the scope of the state of siege's powers. Over the course of six years and three major government changes, this led to the accretion of a large new bureaucracy, power centers and procedures, as well as new goals for government that would outlast the state of siege itself.

Article three of the 1923 state of siege law authorized the military governor explicitly to confiscate weapons and explosives, search private property at any hour, censor the press, postal and electronic communication, prohibit public assemblies or public transit through forbidden zones, relocate civilians at whim, detain “suspects” and vagabonds, and requisition all means of transportation. It concludes by stating the council of ministers may “authorize it to take any other measure which may be necessary for the maintenance of public security and order.” The law did not grant these executive powers immediately, but it required definition and publication through military proclamations.

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<sup>33</sup> The state of siege increased Egyptian academic interest in this feature of the constitution; see Hassan Rached Garrana, “La Législation D’Origine Gouvernementale,” *L’Egypte Contemporaine*, Nos. 221-222 (Nov.-Dec. 1944).

Following the French model, the Egyptian Parliament continued to meet throughout the war and passed legislation as normal. Many of the laws passed during the war had security and welfare intents similar to military proclamations; most importantly, Parliament retained control over revenue and budgetary matters. Because the king appointed ministers independent of parliamentary majorities, the military proclamation became a tool to implement policies the British and Egyptian governments deemed strategically necessary but unpopular with the political elite, which could have held them up even when the prime minister's party enjoyed a majority.

As explained in chapter one, Mustafa al-Nahas was much more effective at producing war legislation and coordinating its execution with the appropriate new bureaucratic offices. But even under al-Nahas, the process of creating a military proclamation took several steps and involved the collaboration of different branches of the government bureaucracy. The cabinet sent ideas for proclamations, whether from within the government, from the British or by popular complaint, to the ministry most concerned with the issue in question, which made a memo with a draft proclamation. For example, the Ministry of Interior noticed a rise in tire thefts in mid-1944 and wrote to the cabinet to approve drafting a proclamation to criminalize it in military court.<sup>34</sup> In the case of British requirements, joint committees with Egyptian ministry, British embassy, military and MESC officials addressed a number of issues such as wheat supply, transportation and refugee administration and reviewed drafts brought by British experts. The prime minister's office kept a file on "martial law complaints" that mixed petitions for intervention in a court decision with requests for new proclamations. The most frequent requests were for new restrictions on prostitution and public morality in general

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<sup>34</sup> DWQ 0075-050075, Ministry of Interior memorandum to the Council of Ministers, 22 August 1944.

as well as from traders requesting a more advantageous price or distribution of the supply commodity of their concern, and notes indicate the cabinet took these concerns into consideration.<sup>35</sup> Drafts were sent to the Government Legal Office, a bureau at the Ministry of Justice charged with defending the government in lawsuits brought against it, for its opinion and any necessary adjustments to prevent conflict with the constitution or existing laws.<sup>36</sup> Final drafts then passed the full council of ministers before the Prime Minister promulgated the proclamation.

The most significant aspect of the military proclamations listed above, besides the novelty of their origin in the executive branch, is that all infringements of them fell to the jurisdiction of a separate and parallel system of military courts.<sup>37</sup> The national and mixed courts continued to sit throughout the war and hear civil and criminal cases under their jurisdiction, while the military courts tried all crimes legislated in military proclamation. As described above, many proclamations created new prohibitions, but many others altered the penal code to transfer the jurisdictions of crimes to military courts.

The state of siege law of 1923 provided for the trial of civilian infractions of military proclamations in military courts, but it only defined a few parameters for the system. Courts would be composed of one Egyptian national court judge and two Egyptian army officers of rank *Yuzbashi* (Captain) or higher. The maximum penalty the

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<sup>35</sup> DWQ 0081-030620 contains petitions from 1939 to 1945 from the Cairo governorate, 0081-030621 contains petitions from all over the country for the year 1945, especially against the Wafd administration of 1942-44.

<sup>36</sup> Examples are contained in 'Abdin and Council of Ministers units at DWQ, e.g. 0069-000653, Amīn Anīs to Muṣṭafa Nuṣrāt, regarding Proclamation 527, 27 September 1944; 0075-055602 Muhammad al-Ashmawi to Council of Ministers regarding Proclamation 487 on rent control, 26 April 1944. Its subordination to the ministry made its legal opinions somewhat less than independent. Laṭīfah Muḥammad Sālīm, *Al-Niẓām Al-Qaḍā'ī Al-Miṣrī Al-Ḥadīth* (Cairo: al-Hay'ah al-Miṣrīyah al-Āmmah lil-Kitāb, 2000), 285.

<sup>37</sup> Except when stipulated in the proclamation, notably for rent control; disputes over urban rental contracts were directed to the native and mixed courts, cf. Proclamations 151 and 315.

courts could levy would be LE 4000 and eight years imprisonment.<sup>38</sup> There are no precise figures before the end of 1941, but the number of cases tried remained small until the middle of that year, when many new British bases opened to accommodate retreating soldiers from Greece and reinforcements from India, Australia and New Zealand and the supply crisis became acute. After Mustafa al-Nahhas became prime minister, there was a continued expansion in the volume of cases and the severity of punishments sentenced until the end of the war, resulting from the increasing number of offenses described above. Over the course of the war, the Egyptian government tried between 140,000 and 160,000 Egyptian and foreign civilians in military courts.<sup>39</sup> The vast majority of these cases were not political or military crimes like anti-government protests or conspiracies, espionage or sabotage. Rather, most were targeted at controlling the mundane economic struggles of the lower and middle classes. The principal offenses were thefts from Allied military camps and smuggling and hoarding stolen military supplies, assault and robbery on Allied military personnel, running illegal brothels, and breaking rules on rationing, price control, meat slaughtering, alcohol and bread quality, and agricultural crop requisitioning. An analysis of these cases therefore provides sources for the social history of Egypt during the war as well as a window into the social and economic priorities of the British and the Egyptian governments.

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<sup>38</sup> Because of the small number of proclamations and cases occurring during the “phony war,” the military courts were not formed until Proclamation 44 of June 1, 1940. Prior to this, cases tried in national court on the basis of military legislation were subject to the approval of a military council. Sālim, *Al-Niẓām Al-Qaḍāʾī*, 276.

<sup>39</sup> There was no official count made after the fact. My estimation is based on an average of 1.1 defendants per case calculated from a list of 5545 individuals tried in 5106 cases between October and December 1942 in a sample Council of Ministers’ file (DWQ 0081-030436) and an estimated total of 150,000 cases drawn from totals in Ministry of Interior annual reports on public security 1941-1943, a February 1944 ‘Abidin Palace report gathering Egyptian ministries’ contributions to the war effort (DWQ 0069-007383) and monthly reports from the military parquet for 1942-1945 (DWQ 0081-030438 to 0081-030809).

By design, the speed of military court procedure, compared to the civilian courts, was intended to ease the crisis of insurrection or war. Many of the military governor's records show summary courts trying up to 80 to 90 cases in a single-day session, or more if the cases involved similar offenses from a similar area, such as failing to report agricultural information or petty theft from military bases.<sup>40</sup> While it is clear from some case descriptions that a few defendants had lawyers, the majority did not, and a significant number were sentenced in absentia; defendants had no rights of *habeas corpus* and many endured long delays before trial. However, the civilian judges took the letter of the law and police investigation seriously, sometimes engaging in tortuous reasoning to apply fact to contradictory military proclamations. As a result, about 10% to 20% of the accused were acquitted for lack of evidence or jurisdiction, a trend that rose over time. (See Figure 2.3 below).

The military court system's development tended towards an increasing hybridity with the civilian criminal justice system. As I will investigate further in chapter three, the issue of jurisdiction was far more complicated under Egyptian control of the military courts. The law explicitly allowed the council of ministers to transfer any offense in the civilian penal code to the jurisdiction of the military courts by prior proclamation; 'Ali Mahir passed the first such proclamation shortly before Italy entered the war, moving espionage offenses as "sabotage" to the military courts. Unlike the First World War, during which only crimes committed towards the British Army or criminals captured by British military police were subject to the tribunals' jurisdiction, any part of the Egyptian Ministry of Interior, from the lowest *ghaffir* (village guard) through the secret police,

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<sup>40</sup> For example the Sharqiya Military Court sentenced 125 people on 25 Feb. 1942, 48 of which were small fines for entering Allied camps without a permit. DWQ 0081-030432, Office of Military Courts.

could transfer any offense through the military prosecutor's office in the Ministry of Justice. In response, many defendants challenged the right of the military court to try their offense in ambiguous cases, or as a legal strategy to buy time.<sup>41</sup> Foreign citizens and subjects were the most common challengers to the jurisdiction of the military courts, but their defense commonly failed, except in the case of crimes committed by Allied soldiers or their families, who enjoyed immunity.<sup>42</sup>

Jurisdictional challenge was the main defense strategy in high-profile cases. The defense used this strategy in trials for the robbery of the Heliopolis branch of the National Bank of Egypt on May 18, 1944, and the assassinations of British Secretary of State Lord Walter Moyne on November 6, 1944 and Prime Minister Ahmad Mahir on February 24, 1945.<sup>43</sup> These lawyers argued that competence over the murder of civilians or robbery of civilian institutions had not been transferred to the military courts. But the military governor had found a way around this defense late in the war. In all three cases, Chief Judge Mahmoud Mansur ruled that the court had jurisdiction because in both cases the

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<sup>41</sup> Some examples of the huge range of circumstances include a butcher's failed challenge of the central government's right to alter the Giza slaughtering schedule (DWQ 0081-30610 Supreme Military Court Case 1890/Giza for 1943); Sixteen students of the al-'Abbasiyya Textile Industrial School charged for spreading communist propaganda who successfully transferred their cases to the civil courts (DWQ 0081-030607 Supreme Military Court case 449 for 1942, 13 Jan. 1943); and an unlicensed Port Said dockworker whose case was canceled and sent to the civil courts because the (civil) penalty for working without a license was greater than the (military) penalty for trespassing in a naval area. (DWQ 0081-030441, Military Court for Port Said case 2066/1944, 20 May, 1945).

<sup>42</sup> There was plenty of room for debate about who was eligible for this immunity. Aircraftsman Barough was charged in Port Said Military Court on 8 Sep. 1942 of smuggling watches and fined LE 3. The British embassy intervened with a regretful note that the investigative branch of the British Military Police should have intervened earlier and sent the case to a court martial; the Egyptian Prime Minister cancelled the Egyptian case. (DWQ 0081-030636, British Embassy to Ministry of Justice, 9 April 1943). In another case, the Greek wife of a British soldier, Beatrice Wood née Ilias, was arrested for running a brothel in Ezbekiya after her husband had been posted outside Egypt, the Egyptian administrators debated for several weeks over who had jurisdiction until the British Embassy considered she "had ceased to be a member of the British Forces as the result of the departure of her husband from Egypt and she no longer has any claim to exemption from the Jurisdiction of the Egyptian courts." (DWQ 0081-030604, Military Court of Ezbekiya, case 2951/1942; British Embassy to Egy. Min. Foreign Affairs, 27 Nov. 1942.) Chapter 2 further addresses the status of foreign soldiers, and chapter 5 deals with foreign civilians.

<sup>43</sup> The Ministry of Justice compiled the judges' report on these cases in Ministry of Justice, *Majmū'a Min Aḥkām Al-Maḥkama Al-'Askariya Al-'Uliya* (Cairo: Al-Maṭba'a al-Amīriya, 1947).

defendants were carrying unlicensed firearms, a crime under the state of siege. Citing Proclamation 389 of April 21, 1943, which allowed all crimes committed in one incident to be tried in the same military tribunal as long as only one of the crimes was under its jurisdiction, Mansur sentenced the death penalty for premeditated murder in both assassination cases and 15 years hard labor for the bank robbers. Legal technicalities aside, Mansur's comment about the logic and justice of the military court trying a bank robbery is telling of the judiciary's attitude: "The intended goal (of this proclamation) is the preservation of security and public order under the circumstances that led to the declaration of the state of siege." Trying the civil crimes and military crimes separately, according to Mansur, would not be adequate because it is the connection between them that represents the threat to security: "The composition of the civil courts do not permit the execution of the intention of the legislation because they are empty of the military element (i.e., officer-justices) necessary to understand the circumstances of military affairs."<sup>44</sup>

The sharp increase in the volume of cases resulting from the vast growth of military jurisdiction led to a bureaucratization of the system that undermined the apolitical nature of the tribunals as imagined in the 1923 legislation. Al-Nahhas expanded the court system shortly after entering office. Whereas the French state of siege legislation allowed the supreme court (*cour de cassation*) of the ordinary judicial system to hear appeals to standing military court decisions, al-Nahhas created separate Supreme Military Courts, which heard some appeals and automatically heard capital cases.<sup>45</sup> Al-

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<sup>44</sup> Justice, *Majmū'a Min Ahkām*, Supreme Military Court case 1065/Heliopolis, 5-6.

<sup>45</sup> The court de cassation in some cases could review and evaluate the legality of new laws, but keeping the jurisdiction restricted to a military court meant no proclamation was likely to be overturned. Moushkeli,



Nahhas also sought to enforce and improve his legal prerogative as military governor to approve, reject or even change military court decisions, which opened a second informal avenue of appeal. More than 50 files in the Egyptian Archives containing full ledgers and occasional case descriptions of military court cases from 1941 to 1945 are the work of a large bureaucracy he created to monitor the courts. This correspondence reveals that he not only had a dedicated staff in the council of ministers' office, but that he had assembled an entire branch of the public security authority at the Ministry of Interior to review court cases as the Office of Military Judgement. The volume of work became so heavy that he repeatedly had to ask for an increased budget. The Office of Military Judgement eventually comprised ten judges of different levels and as many secretaries.<sup>46</sup> The reports of this office reveal the multiple inputs to the final sentence of the court. As an example, in the Supreme Military Court case 449 of 1942, against Anwar Kamil Osman and 17 other students and young men in Cairo for spreading communist propaganda, the defense lawyers successfully proved that the military court had no jurisdiction because the definition of the crime in question ("a foreign threat to the security of the state") fell into articles of the penal code that had not technically been transferred to military jurisdiction. The Office of Military Judgement summarized the court proceedings, and then summarized its consultation both with the military parquet, which disagreed with the result and recommended interning the students indefinitely, and the Government Legal Office, which agreed that the judgement was a sound application of the law. The report even included the substance of a petition by the father of two

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Michel. "L'État de Siège en Egypte et Le Régime des Proclamations Militaires," *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, April-May 1943, Nos. 212-213, 309.

<sup>46</sup> DWQ 0075-05551, Ministry of Finance requisition request to Council of Ministers, 16 Feb. 1944. El-Nahhas reported the caseload was an average of 6032 cases per month and his office was 16,000 cases behind for Alexandria alone.

defendants, “so that they won’t fall behind in school.” The report ends with the office’s final recommendation to the military governor to uphold the military court’s sentence of innocent. At the same time, it instructed the prosecutor to resubmit the charges for the three ringleaders in civilian court, and recommended that the military governor issue a new military proclamation to close the loophole.<sup>47</sup>

Responding to official and unofficial petitions became major work for this office. Al-Nahas’ biggest struggle was therefore to gain legitimate power to adjust or suspend sentences rather than simply affirming or canceling them. This reflects the bureaucratic logic of the Egyptian state of siege, which was a departure from the spectacular demonstrations of violent punishment under British martial law. Except for these rare cases for which the civil penal code was used in the military courts to obtain punishments for murder or treason, the state of siege statutes limited punishment to imprisonment or fine. Al-Nahas inherited several dozen outstanding military cases upon his installment as prime minister and decided to cancel some that his predecessor Husayn Sirri had already accepted; Muhammad Salah Ad-Din, the head of the military parquet, informed him that the military court had refused to allow him to change cases that had been closed by the military governor.<sup>48</sup> This sparked a four-month battle between the parquet and office of military judgement, who used a number of arguments — including British martial law — for near total flexibility in the military governor’s power to adjust military cases, and the government legal office, which claimed the military governor could only cancel cases in the event he believed the law had been misapplied.<sup>49</sup> There is no evidence

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<sup>47</sup> DWQ 0081-030607, Supreme Military Court case 449 for 1942, report dated 13 Jan. 1943.

<sup>48</sup> DWQ 0081-030604, Chief Military Prosecutor Salah Ad-din to El-Nahas, 12 April 1942.

<sup>49</sup> DWQ 0081-030604, Amin Anis, Director of the Government Legal Office, to Salah Ad-Din, 29 April 1942; A memo from the director of the office of Military Judgement, Sayyid ‘Ali Al-Sabibi to El-Nahas

of a permanent settlement within the bureaucracy, but court records indicate the Ministry of Justice tolerated the military governor's "line item" cancellations of part of a sentence (say, a fine *or* jail time).

'Ali Mahir had actively promoted political support for his patron, the king, in the army.<sup>50</sup> In contrast, al-Nahas' management of officer appointments to the military courts is evidence of his ambivalence about this political strategy. While the law required officers serving as judges to be captains or higher ranks, he rarely appointed officers higher than lieutenant colonel (*bimbashi*), and he rotated appointments every three months.<sup>51</sup>

It would be more accurate, therefore, to view the Ministry of Interior as the real arbiter of the military courts. While the civilian judge from the Native Courts could influence the decision making of his two junior officer-judge colleagues, the Interior ministry had many other ways of affecting the outcome of military trials as mentioned above. Besides Mansur's published judgements, I have not been able to find a public comment by an Egyptian judge on the state of siege system during the war that includes a negative reaction to this type of executive interference in the work of the courts. Some judges pushed back against the repeated cancellation of their judgments in memoranda to the government. However, the civilian judiciary was undergoing a great deal of change in this period, and governments often stressed the temporary nature of the military courts, which prevented the emergence of unified opposition to them. Al-Nahas even curried

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suggests that the 1893 rules of court martials for the Egyptian Army supports the military governor's intervention, 14 May 1942; Salah Ad-Din began to couch the reform in terms of "streamlining" the system to avoid bureaucratic delay in a memo to the public security department at the Ministry of Interior, 16 June 1942; and Anis to El-Nahas, 28 July 1942.

<sup>50</sup> See Tripp, "Ali Maher and the Politics of the Egyptian Army".

<sup>51</sup> DWQ 0081-030604, Council of Ministers memoranda to Ministry of Justice, 22 July, 11 Aug., 22, 23, 30 Nov., 1942; 11 Jan., 29 May, 30 June, 10 Nov. 1943; 4 Jan., 5 Feb., 12 Sep. 1944, 16 May, 1945.

favor with the judiciary, fulfilling a long-term Wafd platform promise introducing into parliament a law guaranteeing its institutional independence in 1943.<sup>52</sup> The innovations in the law gave the judges much greater power over the ministry of justice bureaucracy in the appointment and promotion of judges than before.<sup>53</sup> However, al-Nahhas had pioneered a form of control over cases sensitive to political or security matters that rendered judicial independence irrelevant.

The importance to al-Nahhas of controlling the military courts became evident early in the Wafd administration, during a conflict with his lieutenant and confidant Makram 'Ubayd from the party in a political struggle.<sup>54</sup> 'Ubayd alleged his expulsion was partly the result of his refusal as Minister of Supply to withdraw a military charge for yarn smuggling against al-Nahhas' brother-in-law. 'Ubayd struck back with a long series of angry interpellations in parliament exposing the Wafd abuses, which he compiled and published in *Black Book* of 1943 after he was expelled from parliament. Among many other kinds of corruption, 'Ubayd accused al-Nahhas of distributing scarce import permits to Wafd cronies, and also protecting his family members and business partners who were operating without permits by quickly canceling any military court cases against them.<sup>55</sup> If even a small number of these accusations are accurate, then the Wafd effectively used the wartime import and ration restriction regime to run a patronage network with extremely lucrative results for businessmen on the inside. This fact exposes

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<sup>52</sup> Law 66 of 1943, promulgated July 21, 1943.

<sup>53</sup> Sālim, *Al-Nizām Al-Qadā'ī*, 310. This did not prevent the Wafd government from attempting to obtain preferential appointments for important judicial positions, like Amin Anis to the Presidency of the Court of Cassation later that year. FO 141/945, 120/3/44, Memorandum by Walter Smart, 8 Jan. 1944.

<sup>54</sup> Malak Badrawi, "Financial Cerberus? The Egyptian Parliament, 1924-52," in *Re-Envisioning Egypt 1919-1952*, eds. Arthur Goldschmidt, Amy J. Johnson and Barak A. Salmoni (New York: American University in Cairo Press, 2005); Yūnān Labīb Rizq, *Wafd Wa-Al-Kitāb Al-Aswad* (Cairo: Mu'assasat al-Ahrām, 1978).

<sup>55</sup> Makram Bāshā 'Ubayd, *Al-Kitāb Al-Aswad* (Cairo: Al-Maktaba Al-'Arabī lil-Baḥth wal-Nashr, 1984), 141-171, 192.

one of the principal weaknesses of al-Nahhas' files as an archive of the military courts: they have been scrubbed clean of any trace of war profiteering at a level higher than retail operations.

The state of siege allowed the military governor to imprison indefinitely individuals who posed a political or military threat to Egypt or the Allies. The principal goal of this power, from the British perspective, was to suppress enemy spies or agents. Upon the entrance of Italy to the war, however, this expanded quickly to justify the wholesale internment of a potential fifth column — more than 10,000 young Italian men and women. As in many other areas, the Egyptians negotiated for nominal control over the processing and imprisonment of the internees by creating yet another Anglo-Egyptian committee to regulate British influence over the system. There were more gradations to the Military Governor's powers than merely direct imprisonment. Military governors could put vagabonds, repeat misdemeanor offenders or politically active students, for example, "under surveillance" and oblige them to report to a police station on a regular basis or face typically a one to three month sentence in military court.<sup>56</sup>

In the crucial summer of 1941, after the former Army Chief of Staff 'Ali 'Aziz al-Masri tried to escape to Iraq in the middle of Rashid 'Ali's revolt against the British, Sirri interned several politically active Egyptian public figures in the nationalist groups, notably Ahmad Husayn, the leader of *Misr al-Fata*, and Hasan al-Banna, the general guide of the Muslim Brotherhood. Of the two, Ahmad Husayn had been much more vocal in his denunciation of the British and Egyptian assistance to the Allies in the war. He even publicly attacked the state of siege among his law student acolytes: "Which one of

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<sup>56</sup> DWQ 0081-030432 and 030436 military court records reveal a frequency of 20-30 such cases per month in 1941 to 1943. Proclamation 449, December 6, 1943, delegated the power of internment and judicial surveillance to the Minister of Interior.

you is ready to sacrifice himself in the way of revolution?” He asked at a meeting in March 1940. “This (state of siege) has no validity over you — we must rise up and smash it.”<sup>57</sup> Hasan al-Banna had taken a more subtle approach to anti-British agitation, mainly proselytizing in private groups and in the less extreme tones of Islamist revival. However, because of his anti-imperialism he was also effectively placed under surveillance from February to October 1941, when the Ministry of Education transferred his teaching post from Ismailiya to Qena in Upper Egypt. After a temporary return to Cairo, he and his deputy Ahmad al-Sukkari were arrested in October for one month because of al-Sukkari’s associations with al-Masri. The Brotherhood waged a major campaign in public and among politicians to release al-Banna, who subsequently broadened his political base beyond ‘Ali Maher and the royalists to include the Wafd party.<sup>58</sup>

Because internment required no judicial procedure and produced little paperwork, it is difficult to precisely describe the extent of the internment of Egyptians, but there were at least 50 high-profile political internees by 1943, and anecdotally, this number increased during the Wafd government.<sup>59</sup> Unconfirmed petitions provide evidence of many more, rotating on a short term basis and undocumented through Egypt’s prisons, which were already overcrowded from the large number of prisoners formally convicted in military court. Sadiq Tammam petitioned al-Nuqrashi in May 1945 for the investigation of the mistreatment of a group of 41 students interned under the Nahhas government for political organization: the jailers “refused to let the sick go to the hospital, or provide them food or water or allow their families to visit them, and forced

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<sup>57</sup> DWQ 0073-005150, Cairo Police Special Branch secret political report, 3 Mar. 1940.

<sup>58</sup> Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 22; the police found documents linking al-Sukkari to al-Masri in a raid on his house, Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt: The Rise of an Islamic Mass Movement, 1928-1942*, 263-267.

<sup>59</sup> FO 141/941, 71/25/44, Embassy memo, 16 March 1944.

them to sleep on the floor without blankets. This provoked them to start a fight with the guards, who responded by opening fire on the prisoners, wounding many of them.”<sup>60</sup>

As illustrated above, the majority of British complaints about the Egyptian war effort concerned the reservation and weakness with which the Egyptian government resorted to the use of these state of siege powers. This changed, however, once the tide of war turned away from eastern Africa. The opposition parties started strenuously complaining of restrictions to civil liberties under the state of siege. The Wafd was the principal target of attack, but the British were always next in line, especially as al-Nahhas consistently insinuated the British were requesting security measures against specific politicians, like Makram ‘Ubayd, that were in fact Wafd decisions.<sup>61</sup> Lampson had previously complained that Husayn Sirri hadn’t been tough enough in interning “troublemakers,”<sup>62</sup> but now al-Nahhas’ repression was causing the British Embassy headaches. Both British and American diplomats were constantly subject to pleas and petitions from Egyptians for intervention with the Egyptian Government, particularly from the hard core of convicted agents and propagandists.<sup>63</sup> When Anwar Sadat and 14 other internees in Zeitun prison went on hunger strike in February 1944 and petitioned the British Embassy to be accorded the same treatment as political prisoners in India, officials wrote to military intelligence to discover which petitioners were “interned (a) for security reasons at our request and (b) by the Egyptian Government on their own initiative.”<sup>64</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> DWQ 0081-030621 Petition from Sadiq Tamam to Ministry of Communication, forwarded to Council of Ministers, 21 May 1945.

<sup>61</sup> FO 141/941, 71/18/44, Smart, Embassy Memo, 6 March 1944.

<sup>62</sup> FO Confidential Print J 1948/36/14 Nahhas to Eden, April 12, 1942.

<sup>63</sup> NARA RG 84 711.5 American Embassy Files Petitions to Alexander Kirk, 19 Dec. 1942, 3 February 1943, 12 November 1943.

<sup>64</sup> FO 141/941, 71/8/44, Tomlyn to Colonel Jenkins, 25 Feb. 1944.

Their presumption, repeated elsewhere in the diplomatic record, is that Egyptian government internments were not related to “security,” but were rather political internments that served no purpose other than to aid the Wafd. Presumably because the Anglo-Egyptian Internment Committee had been out of use since both the major waves of arrest at the beginning of the war and because the direct military threat was no longer present, the Embassy staff in 1944 needed to be reminded that it had ever existed. More importantly, Assistant Oriental Secretary F.H. Tomlyn reminded Lampson that “the cases of ‘Abbas Halim, ‘Ali Mahir, Muhammad Tahir, etc. were not dealt with by the Internment Committee.”<sup>65</sup> The British discovered that of 50 political internees, they considered at least 20 to pose no threat to their war interest; their internment was motivated purely by Wafd political interest. Upon the British complaint, Amin Osman offered to Oriental Secretary Sir Walter Smart that the Egyptian government would only intern individuals at British request, and not on its own initiative, although they would reserve the right of veto and maintain the facade of government control. Under this promise, the Egyptian government would refer any and all future internment cases to the committee, not just those recommended by the British. However, Tomlyn remained skeptical that al-Nahhas would really agree to it, and Smart warned to keep the agreement oral only, “the Egyptian government must retain the right not to intern or to maintain in interment. This right is of course inherent in Egyptian sovereignty, but we do not want to emphasize this right in a written agreement.”<sup>66</sup>

Despite Osman’s assurances, al-Nahhas never relinquished control over Wafd internments until Faruq dismissed him from the cabinet six months later, although he

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<sup>65</sup> FO 141/941, 71/25/44, Embassy memo, 16 March 1944.

<sup>66</sup> FO 141/941, 71/27/44, Embassy memo, 7 April 1944.



allowed persuasion for clemency in individual cases. Ahmad Mahir set most of the Wafd's enemies immediately at liberty when he became Prime Minister, like Makram 'Ubayd, who immediately joined Mahir's cabinet as Minister of Finance. Because of the Saadist party's long stance against the state of siege, they instead took reprisals against the Wafd party in civilian courts.<sup>67</sup> However, by the end of the state of siege in October 1945, Mahir's successor al-Nuqrashi noted there remained 950 Egyptians under detention at Tora Prison, both under internment and serving military sentences, and 7,000 Egyptians still under surveillance. He refused to release all these prisoners at once, and passed a decree law that would only gradually release these prisoners and extend their parole "for reasons of public security."<sup>68</sup>

#### THE STATE OF SIEGE IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

The institutional record I have examined above unambiguously shows the Egyptian state surveillance, judiciary and penal system in a halting process of expansion. But the archival record has limitations both in the extent of documents remaining to historians as well as its ability to convey the intent of administrators and lawmakers. Here and in later chapters, I will use the news media to investigate the political and cultural context of these developments. After decades of laissez-faire business and publication practices by the 1940s a larger proportion of the public read privately-owned and uncensored news than at any period after 1952.<sup>69</sup> War news dominated the front pages of the daily newspapers and magazines, which became slimmer over the years because of a restricted

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<sup>67</sup> FO 141/1005, 1/31/45 Amin Osman meeting with Walter Smart, 22 Jan. 1945.

<sup>68</sup> Government of Egypt, *Al Waqā'i' Al-Miṣriyya (Official Gazette)*, 7 October 1945.

<sup>69</sup> Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East: A History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 75.

supply of newsprint, but publishers left plenty of room for an examination of the war's effect on local politics and the economy. The purpose of my analysis is not to divine an "average" public opinion about the war. More than 80% of the population, the lower urban and rural classes, were still illiterate, limiting their engagement with politics to mobilization through the Wafd or, more recently, through labor unions. It is more useful to consider the huge diversity of publications as a mechanism for foreign expatriates, the propertied elite, professional classes and government employees, known increasingly together as the *effendiyya*, to carry on a conversation with themselves. The generally liberal attitude towards censorship prior to the war fostered an atmosphere in which political criticism from anonymous authors could cut vertically through the official hierarchy of the legislature, bureaucracy or judiciary. Censorship imposed new "red lines," but the editorial spirit remained. A large number of important publications were actually official organs of the parties and independent politicians: The Wafd had two daily newspapers, the Sa'adist party published *Al-Dustur*, Fikri Abaza, a prolific parliamentarian, published *Al-Musawwar* magazine, etc. Despite the deep flaws of Egypt's parliamentary democracy, an elite pluralism was alive and well and had an important role in the wartime state expansion. Although the vast majority of domestic political discourse focused on the explicit traditional power centers like the King, the British or the parties, persistent commentary about the state of siege institutions reflected a wide range of ideas about sovereignty, power and the possible futures of the Egyptian state.

### *The Parliamentary Opposition*

It is not surprising that the most frequent parliamentary complaint about the state of siege concerned the government's use of censorship that restricted political news the opposition felt had no bearing on military security. This is ironic, because the French precedent in state of siege legislation kept parliament in session during a state of crisis rather than shuttering it, as customary under British martial law, which allowed it to remain a pulpit for dissent.<sup>70</sup> Although the press was prohibited from publishing directly from some of the parliamentary record, the full record was published in the parliamentary gazette. Parliament's right to publish it survived a significant challenge in late 1941.<sup>71</sup> The complaints increased under the Wafd government, because of their firmer control over the elected and unelected institutions of state and because censorship seemed less justified as the war receded from Africa. The recently founded Journalist Syndicate frequently petitioned government to slacken censorship. In early 1943, they reminded Minister of Interior Fu'ad Sirag al-Din that the Wafd had editorialized on April 1, 1940, when out of power, that "...military censorship should not mean censorship over all the political affairs of Egypt so that Egyptians become blind automatons in an era of independence with no share in the matters of their country..."<sup>72</sup> Opposition party leaders eventually made higher profile public petitions to the British embassy and then to Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin in November 1943 demanding they intervene to end the censorship of state of siege, which in their opinion represented an infringement of

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<sup>70</sup> Although there was initially a "State of Siege" committee that would make rulings on the legality of military proclamations, there was never any legal or constitutional requirement that the military governor had to follow these rulings. This caused controversy during Hussein Sirry's tenure when parliament was split between opposition parties (*Ithnein wa Dunya*, Jan 26 1941), but once the Wafd won the majority of seats in 1942, they simply did away with the committee and let Nahhas do as he pleased.

<sup>71</sup> FO 371/27434, J 3596, Lampson to FO, 24 Oct. 1941, narrates Lampson's effort to censor the sessions.

<sup>72</sup> DWQ 0069-013218, Petition from Journalist's Syndicate to Minister of Interior, 4 June 1943.

Egyptian sovereignty.<sup>73</sup> This was a veiled reference to the British coup that put the Wafd in power. However, these politicians knew that the British could influence which party was in power, but their treaty commitments had restricted them from actually interfering in day-to-day Arabic language censorship decisions. After reviewing many newspapers and magazines from this period, considering the allegations of the Journalists' Syndicate above, and according to the reports of the British foreign-language news censor Robert Furness, it seems that besides forbidding actual war events, censorship of political issues was rather patchy and it was used more readily as a weapon against specific enemies rather than to completely obliterate all types of oppositional political discourse.<sup>74</sup>

The other explicit focus of contention in parliament was the government's internment of its political opponents, most notably al-Nahhas' imprisonment of 'Ali Mahir for the three years of Wafd rule. The opposition alleged that this infringed his parliamentary immunity as a member of the Senate.<sup>75</sup> Al-Nahhas countered in several public forums including commissioning an article in the legal journal *Al-Muhama* by the head of the military parquet that argued it was within al-Nahhas's right as military governor to carry out an act that would protect the sovereignty of the country. He cited examples of political dissidents being removed from the parliaments of France and Germany during World War I, in addition to a healthy dose of British martial law precedent in justification.<sup>76</sup> The Wafd parliament passed a declaration of the act's legality before the end of 1942.

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<sup>73</sup> FO 371/35541 Petition from Ahmed Mahir, Makram 'Ubayd and Muhammad Husayn Haykal to Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt, Via British Embassy, J 5200, 29 November 1943.

<sup>74</sup> St. Antony's College Middle East Archive, Personal Papers of R.A. Furness; see in particular "Note on censorship: particularly as applied in the interest of the Egyptian Government," 1944 n.d.

<sup>75</sup> Covered heavily in April 1942 press; see *Ithnein wa Dunya*, 27 April 1942, 2-3.

<sup>76</sup> Tawfiq Ahmad Khashan, "Essay on the Right of the Military Governor to Arrest... A Member of Parliament..." *Al-Muḥāmā*, Vol. 24, No. 1-3, (Sep.-Nov. 1943), 102-110.

### *Liberal Critiques*

If public criticism over the abuse of these executive measures as political tactics was quite common, opposition to the long-term shifts in governmental policy under the state of siege were less frequent and more diffuse. These critics came from the elite minority that had the most to lose from the *etatist* political economic bent of the war measures: landowners, industrialists and especially foreign businessmen. As I will examine in chapter four, the war crisis actively helped consolidate certain interest groups, like the Federation of Egyptian Industries, whose membership increased by 50 percent in the first four years of the war alone, and which advocated a better (i.e., more liberal) balance of “personal rights, social development ... and the government control over economic life.”<sup>77</sup>

The publication that wrote the most frequently about the judicial and legislative developments in the state of siege was the French-language *Journal Des Tribunaux Mixtes*. For the first time in the history of these courts, military proclamations and judgments were creating new Egyptian law to which foreigners were subject. As a court gazette, the majority of its published material was simply the text of the proclamations, laws and regulations as well as court decisions and contract advertisements. Most of the original articles were intended to explain inconsistencies resulting from the overly rapid promulgation of some laws, especially when they touched on civil law, contracts or taxation. However, a definite editorial voice emerges. Although the Mixed Court personnel were resigned to their fate — the courts were slated to close in 1949, and the journal ceased to publish at that time — they hoped to preserve the shared spirit of liberal

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<sup>77</sup> Egyptian Federation of Industries, 1943 Annual Report, 8. See also Dasūqī, *Miṣr Fi Al-Ḥarb*, 311-316.

legality and liberal economic policy that had animated the last 70 years of Egyptian governance. They frequently editorialized on specific proclamations, such as Proclamation 358, which required industrial companies of a certain size to pay low-income employees annual 40% cost of living bonuses to compensate for war inflation. The editorial criticized both the questionable macroeconomic principle of this policy, as well as the unfairness of targeting particular businesses and interfering with their liberty of contract.<sup>78</sup>

Journal contributor Michel Moushkeli, a professor of public law at Fuad University and L'Ecole Francaise de Droit, wrote most specifically about the theoretical expansion of executive power the state of siege represented and the possible long-term repercussions of day-to-day government operating in this fashion.<sup>79</sup> Moushkeli pointed out while many proclamations were merely executive, like setting the price of a commodity or appointing judges, many others took the form of genuine statutes, which themselves required executive regulations from the ministries that would be charged with enforcing them. These proclamations often cited existing laws to adjust their provisions, increase their penalties or to shift penal jurisdiction to the military courts; others created completely new services, like licensing and inspection regimes at ports, that overlapped with prior practices. Bringing up the Wafd's original objection to giving the position of military governor to the prime minister, Moushkeli pointed out that the prime ministers also delegated this legislative power to deputy military governors in special military zones in Cairo, Alexandria, the Canal and the North Delta, who together issued thousands

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<sup>78</sup> "Les Problemes De L'heure: L'Indemnité Obligatoire de Vie Chère," *Journal des Tribunaux Mixtes*, 29 and 30 Nov. 1943, 1.

<sup>79</sup> Moushkeli, Michel. "L'État de Siège en Egypte et Le Régime des Proclamations Militaires," *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, Nos. 212-213, (April-May 1943): 292-396. This article was digested and published more widely in the *Journal Des Tribunaux Mixtes*, 5 June 1944, 8 Jan. 1945.

of local proclamations over the course of the war. He speculated that the more deeply martial legislation became embedded into ordinary legislation the more difficult it would be to end the state of siege, or that many illiberal statutes would end up being preserved by decree. These predictions ended up coming true.

The focus of Moushkeli's critique, however, is the government's evolving interpretation of "necessity" that justified proclamations remote from military operations. His principal example was Proclamation 113, passed in January 1941, which allowed the Suez Canal Company to suspend making payments to its bondholders because war conditions had closed the Mediterranean Sea to shipping, and its revenues had almost entirely dried up. Perhaps of all the proclamations, none hit so immediately at the financial interests of the wealthy elite, who had invested in those bonds, and the issue was debated before parliament shortly after its opening in November 1941. Minister of Finance Hasan Sadiq defended the cabinet's decision to make the proclamation on the following lines: "Modern wars aren't waged only on battlefields, they are waged on the political and moral planes, as well as in the economic domain... the war economy must therefore be included in the concept of public order."<sup>80</sup> This argument relocates the state of siege and the concept of security from relating simply to the realm of military or police actions to keep civilians safe or to prevent immediate threats to the war front. It justifies action in nearly any possible field of government regulation and possibly with very long-term and abstract goals. In short, he argues, the text of this proclamation explicitly conflates the concept of "public interest" with "public order and security." Moushkeli concludes that the Egyptian constitution's state of siege and assorted legislation have

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<sup>80</sup> *Parliamentary Record 1941*, (Cairo: Al-Maṭbaʿa Al-Amīriya 1941), 158. Cited in Moushkeli, "L'État de Siège," 312.

become a hybrid between the form of French martial law and the spirit of British martial law inherited from the experience of the First World War that allowed the constant redefinition of necessity, but with none of the urgency of a real state of exception.

In contrast to the pragmatic, short-term, situational British attitude to the state of siege, the Americans constantly had their eye on the long-term political implications of expanded executive power in Egypt, especially after the US military presence in Cairo expanded in 1943 during the North Africa campaign. Jasper Brinton, a long-serving American judge on the Mixed Courts, sent the top US embassy officials a 25-page memo in July 1944 outlining the history and current structure of the state of siege. Under Moushkeli's influence, he complained of the numerous proclamations that "fairly fall outside the scope of the law as not being 'necessary' for the maintenance of security and public order'".<sup>81</sup> Like the British, he pressured American officials to do what they could in the short term about the treatment of foreigners in prison. His principal concern, however, was the long-term consequences for the presence of the American community in Egypt. He complained that Americans unaware of rapidly-changing military proclamations on economic matters could be at a disadvantage in military courts conducted entirely in Arabic and frequently with summary procedures. US Embassy Counselor Joseph Jacobs' gloss on Brinton's report refocused the issue on diplomatic strategy. Lacking Brinton's experience with or taste for complex negotiations to restore the compromises of the capitulations era, which was drawing swiftly to a close, Jacobs recommended judicious pressure on the British to support ending the state of siege as

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<sup>81</sup> NARA RG 84, 800 Egypt, Brinton to Tuck, 2 July 1944. While Brinton was a prolific contributor to legal journals and wrote what was for a long time the definitive history of the Mixed Courts, he kept these comments in private memos to the US Embassy as a legal attaché. This became his principal job in semi-retirement after the Mixed Courts closed permanently in 1949. Brinton rewrote and updated this memo a year after the state of siege was declared again during the Palestine war.



early as possible. He denied the issue was very urgent, as so few American civilians were subject to the state of siege; the majority of US residents were immune armed forces members. Finally, he pointed out the irony that the British had coerced the Egyptians to declare the state of siege without foreseeing how drastically it would increase the prime minister's powers. This explained "why the British are so anxious always to see that the Prime Minister is pro-British, or otherwise there would be far more headaches than Judge Brinton refers to in his memoranda."<sup>82</sup> It seems the Americans learned more about the coming age of neocolonial influence from this episode in Egyptian history than the British did.

### *Support for the State of Siege*

Just as the majority of attacks on the state of siege powers took place in the greater context of political struggles, opinions supporting these powers also failed to distinguish them from other aspects of Egypt's war effort or its new social welfare commitments. Fidelity to the treaty and participation with the British in the war effort as an act of Egyptian sovereignty remained resonant tropes in the public news media until the post-war betrayals over treaty renewal in 1947 and Egypt's disastrous defeat in its war against Israel in 1949. Even before the threat from Italy was immediate, early 1940 witnessed an upsurge in popular and patriotic support for defending Egypt. The news media highlighted volunteerism for special police forces and civil defense squads, and later, for refugee aid.<sup>83</sup> 'Abd al-Rahman 'Azzam had multiple parades for his newly created "Territorial Army," a 20,000-man force recruited from the peasantry to act as auxiliaries

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<sup>82</sup> NARA RG 84, Egypt 800, Jacobs memorandum to Tuck, 5 July 1944.

<sup>83</sup> "Al-Azhar will carry weapons!" *Al-Musawwar*, 22 March 1940, shows Al-Azhar seminarians casting off their robes to don scout uniforms.

to the Egyptian and British Military in the case an Italian force reached the delta, and stressed the social development and education opportunities given recruits.<sup>84</sup> At the moments when the threat of war to Egypt had been its greatest, in late 1940 and late 1942, the top-circulating daily newspaper *Al-Ahram* and weekly magazines *Al-Musawwar* and *Al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya* ran editorials specifically praising government cooperation with the British, which had protected Egyptian civilians from physical harm, and in favor of social measures that prevented them from privation.<sup>85</sup> In July 1942, the pro-British editor of *Al-Muqattam* Karim Thabit ran repeated editorials dedicated to supporting the enforcement of interior security, affirming the police's decision to preemptively intern 100 "dangerous individuals," and to increase the enforcement of supply infractions.<sup>86</sup> These magazines also kept up with stories of Nazi barbarity in the territories they conquered, comparing favorably the austerity of the state of siege and the relative remove of the British military presence with the forced labor regimes and starvation rationing of the German occupations (directed at the Egyptian popular imagination in the pronoun neutral "What happens when the Germans invade *a country*?" my emphasis).<sup>87</sup>

Egypt's biggest-selling magazine *Al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya* also had the means to begin running public opinion polls about the war and other topics of interest to the *effendiya*, like marriage and education. Without any information about its methodology, I consider the information the magazine presented to more accurately reflect the editors'

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<sup>84</sup> "They Were Lifeless, Now They March," *Al-Musawwar*, 12 Jan. 1940. This project was an outgrowth of 'Azzam and Ali Mahir's sponsorship of pro-monarchy paramilitary youth groups in the 1930s. See Jankowski, *Young Egypt*. See Chapter Two for the controversy over its political role.

<sup>85</sup> For example, coverage in *Al-Ahram*, 15 Dec. 1940, *Musawwar*, 20 Dec. 1940. Special "war issues" of *Musawwar* and *Al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya* were produced in December 1940 and Jan. 1941, respectively.

<sup>86</sup> Karim Thabit, "Internal Security in these Critical Times," *Al-Muqattam*, 1 July 1942, 5; "Internal Security Continued: No Mercy and No Hesitation!" *Al-Muqattam*, 2 July 1942, 5.

<sup>87</sup> "When the Germans invade a country..." *Al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya*, 2 Sep. 1941.

ideas than anything else, but these polls are still fascinating artifacts because of the facades of objectivity they present. During the heavy air raids of 1941, they asked the public “Should Egypt be governed by a parliament or without a parliament?” This question was framed in response to the parliamentary logjam on issues of supply and emergency economic measures, but it also reflects the public’s confusion about the structure of the state of siege, under which parliament would always remain in session. In any case, the magazine was able to divide the response by social class: 78% of “upper class” respondents said parliament should remain in session, but only 63% of middle and lower class respondents said so (19% of the lower class had no opinion).<sup>88</sup> This result could reflect the differential class benefits that the war was bringing Egyptian society: Parliament was defending the upper classes’ ability to reap high agricultural prices, and doing nothing to improve wages for the working class — but an all-powerful executive would be able to be more fair.

The popular media explained and popularized the prime minister’s semi-separate identity as the military governor, the executive officer of the state of siege. When he made important proclamations, this usually received prominent coverage with some context about the problem the proclamation was targeted at solving. Using his title as “military governor,” despite the position’s tenuous connection to the Egyptian military, emphasized that these policies were Egypt’s principal contribution to the war effort. The extraordinary result is that the incarnation of the military governor was constantly narrated as solving problems, while the “prime minister” was stuck negotiating with an

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<sup>88</sup> “Al-Ithnein asks the Public’s Opinion in Cairo: Should Egypt be governed with a Parliament or without a Parliament?” *Al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya*, 28 July 1941, 1. In another question, 50% of the lower classes supported holding new elections at the present moment compared to only 44% of the middle classes and 32% of the upper classes, presumably because they wished to see the Wafd regain control of parliament.



Figure 2.2. Institutional schizophrenia under the state of siege. Military Governor Husayn Sirri taking Prime Minister Sirri to prison. "Haven't you read the military proclamation that punishes any slander of (Egypt's) fiscal reputation?" *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, August 18, 1941. (R) Makram 'Ubayd to Mustafa al-Nahhas — "Leader of the nation.. and president of the wafd.. and prime minister.. and military governor.. and minister of interior.. and foreign minister.. and deputy from Samnud.. Oh brother, which one is talking?" *Ruz al-Yusuf*, July 23, 1942.

intractable parliament. The political caricature, which had become a common popular feature in the weekly newsmagazines, even more starkly portrayed this legal fiction, frequently showing the prime minister in a military uniform. The satirical possibilities are indicative of the public view of this position: in one August 1941 cartoon, Husayn Sirri dressed in uniform as the military governor is seen hauling off Husayn Sirri in a suit as the Prime Minister, saying "Haven't you read the military proclamation that punishes any slander of (Egypt's) fiscal reputation?"<sup>89</sup> (Sirri had been bargaining with the British to subsidize the cotton crop and Parliament opposed raising taxes to supplement the low British offer).

From 1942 to 1944, the Wafd party was more credibly able to cultivate popular support for its use of the state of siege than prior governments, and this policy enjoyed some success, particularly among workers.<sup>90</sup> Much of its program for labor policy was

<sup>89</sup> *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, 18 Aug. 1941, 5.

<sup>90</sup> Beinun and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 285-304, explains the Wafd's courtship of the trade union movement during the war.

passed as laws in parliament, including the recognition of unions, a personal work contract, compulsory worker injury insurance, and personal worker identification codes. But rather than charging striking workers in military courts right away, it took many steps to attempt to negotiate their returning to work. Military proclamations instituted conciliation committees between management and workers for strikes; more importantly, a series of proclamations forced industries to pay increasing cost of living adjustments to their workers starting at 25% of base pay to more than 100% for the lowest paid workers at the end of the war. These measures received constant positive coverage in workers' papers like *Shubra* and *al-Madaniya* until Wafd corruption became increasingly evident at the end of 1943.<sup>91</sup> To a certain extent, the state of siege food supply program won popular support and stemmed urban unrest because it worked: The state did bring cotton cultivation under control, increased the supply of basic foodstuffs and maintained their prices in cities. Increases in the urban population's cost of living were mitigated by subsidized bread, grains, meat and fuel, and during good harvest years, landowning peasants benefitted from high fixed government prices. As I will examine in more detail in chapter four, the government made an effort to publicly deflect complaints about corruption in wholesale supply onto retail black marketers. This strategy extended to the nature of the penal code itself: most military court convictions in rationing or price infringement cases mandated the publication of the conviction in the shopkeeper's local newspapers to alert customers. The minister of supply also made repeated appeals for private subjects to denounce suspected hoarders.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> "Military order targeting price increases," *Shubra*, 17 Sep. 1941. "Minster of Social Affairs speaks on workers and low-income employees," *El-Madaniya*, 12 June 1942.

<sup>92</sup> "Total War on Profiteers," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 4 May 1943. "Are YOU guilty of working hand in hand with the black marketeers?" *The Egyptian Gazette*, 14 May 1943. "Supply matters: ways of fighting

Even opposition politicians that had criticized the abuses of censorship could turn around and support extreme implementations of the state of siege in other more populist areas. In July of 1942, weekly magazine *Ruz al-Yusuf*, which was typically anti-Wafdist in its political orientation,<sup>93</sup> ran a series of articles entitled “If I Were the Military Governor General.” They enlisted a series of opposition politicians to give their ideas — and rather than opposing the wide powers of the Wafd, these politicians proposed much more draconian policies than even those just being introduced by al-Nahhas. Zakariya Mihran, member of the senate, wrote he would pass proclamations forcing absentee landlords back to their land and setting high quotas of grain procurement to encourage them to improve their land. He proposed raising the tax rate on exceptional profits from the current range of 20% to 50% up to 70%, the complete nationalization of all food supply and even the appointment of “Military Social Guides” in rural areas that would specifically investigate and enforce military proclamations “designed to raise the social level of the peasant.”<sup>94</sup> ‘Abd al-Salam al-Shazly, royalist ex-minister and member of parliament, went further the next week, claiming he’d increase penalties on hoarding, spreading rumors, and even impose the death penalty for smuggling.<sup>95</sup> *Ruz al-Yusuf*’s interviews with employees of the Ministry of Social Affairs “to gain a look at the technical side of drafting military proclamations” reveal the force of the bureaucracy’s support for implementing social reform by proclamation. Of the three men and two women interviewed, several voiced support for proclamations more explicitly targeting

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hoarding” *Al-Ahram*, 13 May 1943, featured instructions “to our citizens” to denounce neighbors to a telephone hotline to the ministry of supply.

<sup>93</sup> *Ruz el-Yusuf* was subsequently shuttered between January 1 and April 1, 1943 by the censorship office for making unsubstantiated veiled rumors about Mustafa el-Nahhas. *The Egyptian Gazette*, January 28, 1943.

<sup>94</sup> Zakariya Mehran, “If I Were the Military Governor,” *Ruz el-Yusuf*, July 16, 1942.

<sup>95</sup> ‘Abd el-Salam el-Shazly, “If I Were the Military Governor,” *Ruz el-Yusuf*, July 23, 1942.

public vice, banning prostitution, alcohol, gambling, dancing and begging, and setting dress codes. They also proposed broad welfare programs (“raise the salary of the Egyptian soldier,” “require a minimum of Egyptian employees at companies,” “educate the illiterate,” “finish the Aswan dam and Electric plant”) as well as nationalist goals (“make Arabic the official language of government and business,” “force cinemas to play Egyptian movies.”)<sup>96</sup> Finally, two suggested punishments of lashing and the death penalty for black marketeering, and one for “young men who deceive girls.” While some of this is clearly ideological grandstanding, it reflects new norms of government intervention becoming widespread ideals among all government employees and politicians. Finally, despite Makram ‘Ubayd’s criticism of Wafd corruption in his *Black Book*, ‘Ubayd naturally portrayed his own role enforcing military proclamations as the Minister of Supply, prior to his expulsion, in a positive light. He depicts the arbitrary influence of the military governor as the one serious fault in a supply and rationing system that was generally necessary during the war crisis.

As early as 1941, a political trope forecasting the new world order “after the war” emerged in all varieties of publications.<sup>97</sup> Commentary in government and private discourse contained great hopes that all the assistance Egypt had given to the Allies in winning the war would justify the Egyptian government’s demand for a treaty negotiation that would lead to the withdrawal of British troops by a defined date. By 1945, the

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<sup>96</sup> “Technical Military Proclamations...!” *Ruz el-Yusuf*, July 30, 1942. On the dominance of Hollywood in this period, a result in part of demand from Allied soldiers, see Robert Vitalis, “American Ambassador in Technicolor and Cinemascope: Hollywood and Revolution on the Nile,” in *Mass Mediations: New Approaches to Popular Culture in the Middle East and Beyond*, ed. Walter Armbrust (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

<sup>97</sup> A few examples: “Development of Industry after the war,” *Shubra*, 11 June 1942; “Women after the War,” *Al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya*, 11 May, 1943; Hassan ‘Akūsh and Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Al-Fīshāwī, *Mushkilāt Miṣr Ba’d Al-Ḥarb* (Cairo: Sharikat Al-Shamarlī bi-Miṣr, 1945) (Egypt’s Postwar Problems); Muṣṭafā Nuṣrat, *Siyasa Ma Ba’d Al-Ḥarb Fī Miṣr: Al-Zirā’a* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at Laja’ al-Aytam al-Māsūnī, 1944) (Egypt’s Postwar Agricultural Policy)

successor government to the Wafd had the difficult job of reconciling its virulent opposition to the state of siege in 1943-44 with both this self-promotion and the management of a bureaucracy that had become accustomed to these forms of power. The British War Office opposed the end of the state of siege prior to victory in Europe, but al-Nuqrashi bowed to pressure to phase out censorship in June 1945 months before formally ending the state of siege.<sup>98</sup> An uneasy public dynamic emerged in the following years between the official government portrayal of the security state easing up as a part of the realization of its goal of liberal and democratic independence, and increasing police crackdowns on the more Radical student, leftist and Islamist movements.

## CONCLUSION

The British, who for 20 years tacitly considered the state of siege clause as a potential replacement for martial law under the control of their own military, received the necessary facilities to conduct their war — and yet circumstance forced them to cede the administrative controls with which they maintained hegemony throughout similar informal areas elsewhere in their empire. Mustafa al-Nahhas, the Egyptian prime minister who by the consensus of all political actors commanded the loyalty of the greatest majority of the electorate, resorted to exploiting his illiberal powers as military governor in order to achieve legislative goals any prime minister should have been able to obtain far earlier under a fairer constitutional monarchy — without British interference in Egyptian politics. The military penal system took two divergent paths, but each became

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<sup>98</sup> WO 208/505, War Office to General Officer Commander in Chief, BTE, 5 Dec. 1944; the Wafd was pressuring for an end of the state of siege to guarantee freer elections in January, in which they ultimately lost heavily. NARA RG 84, 800, Tuck to State, “Egyptian Government’s Partial Revocation of Martial Law and the State of Siege,” 13 June 1945.



more closely tied to the legal and bureaucratic structure of the state than during British martial law: the majority of offenders became subject to misdemeanor fines and short prison sentences in parallel jurisdiction to the civilian courts, while a minority disappeared altogether into indefinite detention. Despite the system's subversion of liberal legality, the law of the state of siege was not merely a facade for authoritarian rule — rather it actively determined projects and power struggles.

Moreover, it is difficult to disaggregate the opinions of the political elite about law, punishment, constitutional necessity, welfare and modernity in the complex of legislation and institutions that the state of siege represented. Although my focus at the end of this chapter has been on public support for *étatist* measures enforced by an illiberal justice system, a public discourse of liberal constitutionalism in support of the state of siege remained an important element for the duration of the war. Especially towards the end of the war, most of the Egyptian media expressed with infectious optimism that the war would secure its aim of making the world safe for democracy, and that decolonization and reform in Egypt would result in the solution of various social problems through liberal methods. The strength of this optimism connected state of siege reforms to the performance of budding Egyptian sovereignty, especially in areas where the state of siege eliminated distinctions of foreigner and Egyptian. However, the war aggravated the state's interest in maintaining the security of public space, private property, agricultural production and population movement. The following chapters examine the ways in which the state of siege powers became embedded in the different practices of the increasingly more independent Egyptian state.

**Figure 2.3. Military Court Parquet Misdemeanor Reports to the Military Governor**

A. Before the Wafd reorganization: 70 court dates between Feb. 5, 1941 and Mar. 23, 1942. Source: DWQ 0081-030432. See Appendix for detail.

Type of Crime	Defendants	Innocent	Fine Only	Prison Only	Fine and Prison	Average Fine in Piastres	Avg. Prison Sentence in Days	Suspended Sentence	Canceled by Military Governor	Notes
Theft	765	100	7	655	3	2140	55	7	13	
Agriculture	160	8	119	22	11	315	14	3	2	
Black Market	1411	210	991	171	39	283	27	1	26	
Weapons	569	39	453	73	4	646	148	3	9	
Meat and Alcohol	177	12	117	45	3	536	35	1	0	
Bread	32	4	27	1	0	1201	90	3	4	
Trespass	258	23	232	3	0	93	28	0	0	
Parole	80	7	0	73	0	0	70	0	5	
Other	105	15	59	30	1	453	32	0	1	
TOTAL	3557	418	2005	1073	61			18	60	

B. After the Wafd: 72 court dates between July 18, 1942 and Dec. 3 1942. Source: DWQ 0081-030436. See Appendix for detail.

Type of Crime	Defendants	Innocent	Fine Only	Prison Only	Fine and Prison	Average Fine in Piastres	Avg. Prison Sentence in Days	Suspended Sentence	Canceled by Military Governor	Notes
Theft	150	150	3	888	9	1152	57	63	30	
Agriculture	928	183	199	22	524	1270	87	283	50	
Black Market	2167	576	1114	359	118	1581	95	50	93	403 shop closures 123 lashings
Weapons	224	38	136	55	5	903	104	9	7	
Meat and Alcohol	461	56	447	66	2	583	56	6	36	188 shop closures 1 lashing
Bread	175	32	114	11	18	603	85	2	4	
Trespass	43	6	27	10	0	147	22	3	1	
Parole	63	2	0	61	0	0	52	0	7	
Other	142	15	101	17	9	612	98	1	1	
TOTAL	5255	1048	2031	1491	685			417	229	

## **Chapter III**

### **Boundaries**

#### **Distinguishing Military and Civilian Spaces and Subjects**

Around sunset on August 4, 1941 at the al-Rous railway station, a small stop on the desert branch line between Wasta and Fayyum, 75 kilometers south of Cairo, Egyptian employees were enjoying an evening cup of tea when three European soldiers firing their guns in the air burst into the station house. Upon understanding the soldiers' claim to be British officers staging a raid for escaped German POWs, the rattled clerks allowed them to search the station and even offered them tea and fuel for their airplane. The soldiers made a quick scan of the premises, and squad leader Second Lieutenant Bellamy-Brown shot the lock off a storage shed to search inside it. They then declared they were returning to the nearby airplane landing strip where they had arrived and expected the German Air Force would try to rescue the prisoners. The stationmaster reported the incident to the local Egyptian police, who understood that there was now a squad (or two) of European soldiers that were either a British raiding party and/or escaped Axis prisoners at the al-Rous airstrip. At 3 a.m. the next morning, the police approached the airstrip in two cars, which the encamped European soldiers surrounded, ordering "hands up!" and firing upon them when the police did not obey. There ensued a gun battle of several minutes in near darkness that ended only when the local commandant realized the soldiers were British, who had assumed *they* were the German escapees, and shouted a ceasefire in English.

Two Egyptian policemen were seriously injured, and one required the amputation of his arm.

As explicated in a series of letters between Egyptian Minister of National Defense Hassan Sadiq and Commander in Chief British Troops in Egypt (BTE) General Sir James Marshall-Cornwall, the miscommunication of this sensitive information occurred along parallel lines of communication that overlapped but failed in three instances.<sup>1</sup> On August 3, British GHQ had informed Cairo Police Vice-Commandant Miralai Salim Zaki of the escaped prisoners, and Zaki told the Ministry of Interior and presumably local authorities in Fayyum. However, Marshall-Cornwall could not deny that GHQ had never contacted Zaki again, nor even the nearest British military installations, after they decided the next day to stage a British commando mission just hours before sending it off. Whether or not the Ministry of Interior intelligence reached the al-Rous police outpost, these Egyptian police contacted their local British military counterparts, who knew nothing of the raid, so both parties considered the men at the airstrip armed and dangerous fugitives. Sadiq's retort reflects the fragile balance with which the Egyptian security forces maintained their authority separate from the British, but the importance to which he attached that distinction:

“As you no doubt realise, this is a very grave incident which should never have happened and should certainly not happen again in the future. Searching houses and offices should only be done by the Egyptian Police Authorities under orders from the Military Governor or the Parquet. British soldiers should not be in a position to take such matters in their hands unauthorised. Moreover, an incident of

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<sup>1</sup> DWQ 0076-000301. The preceding account is an interpretation of the two narratives in Sadiq to Marshall-Cornwall, 7 Aug. 1941, and Marshal-Cornwall to Sadiq, 10 Aug. 1941. Further correspondence in the file relates to compensation for the Egyptian policeman whose arm was amputated. The Ministry of Interior initially demanded LE 500, about 10 times his annual salary, but the BTE Deputy Assistant Director for Claims rebutted with an offer of LE 75. The issue was not settled by December 1943, when the Mudir of Fayyum wrote to the Minister of Interior complaining about the meagerness of the sum.

this nature is liable to lead to complications and misunderstandings with possibly very unfortunate results.”<sup>2</sup>

The event occurred in a remote enough area and censorship was effective enough that no form of this story ever became public knowledge. More broadly, the historiography of the war in Egypt in both English and Arabic, under the influence of an ideology of security, has sought either to conceal or explain incidents like the vignette above as an anomalous penetration of civilian territory rather than a routine aspect of war for Egyptians. These narratives follow the Egyptian state’s two-century-long production of distinctly defined desert, agricultural, maritime and urban space, as well as the contemporary division of space between the British and Egyptian authority and the production of defensive space dictated in the 1936 treaty. In fact, the threat posed by Axis air attacks was ever-present throughout Egypt from Libya in the West from 1940 to 1942, from Greece and Crete in the north from 1941 to 1944, and from Ethiopia in the south and Syria in the east from 1940 to 1941. Warplane technology, including explosive and incendiary bombs, parachute mines and paratroopers, challenged and exposed these diplomatic and military distinctions. Moreover, security threats to the Egyptian state and Allies in wartime were not limited to explicitly identifiable military attacks. They also included foreign espionage and fifth-column sabotage, opportunistic crime and political protest. The circulation of nearly half a million Allied troops near major population centers compounded the problems of managing civilian security.

State of siege and immunity agreements with armed forces established the jurisdictional regimes that maintained the fiction that the European war and Egyptian civil life were distinct. Just as the diplomatic agreements restricted the Allied armed

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<sup>2</sup> DWQ 0076-000301. Sadiq to Marshall-Cornwall, 7 Aug. 1941.

forces to their courts martial and civilians to Egyptian courts, the Egyptian state of siege made a subsidiary distinction, rendering civilians as either subjects of civil or military courts. But both of these mechanisms strained to contain the intensive daily contact between Egyptians and European soldiers. Hundreds of thousands of Egyptians went to work daily on Allied military bases, and nearly as many Allied soldiers crossed into Egyptian civilian space either in an official capacity or on leave in Cairo and Alexandria. The more spacial distinctions the security regime produced, the more possibilities for their violation existed, requiring a further expansion of the bureaucracy to enforce them.

## CREATING MILITARY SPACE

No code of law exists without the creation of discrete spaces of its jurisdiction and the complications of its enforcement in these spaces. In light of the rapid expansion of the US homeland security and military-industrial complex after September 11, 2001, social science disciplines and long-form journalism have directed a critical eye towards the social effects of the transformation of space and bureaucratic surveillance both domestically within America,<sup>3</sup> and in its military occupation in Iraq, Afghanistan and bases in many other countries.<sup>4</sup> As the Second World War remains the realm of the field of history, there have not yet been as many examples of critical analyses of the war that use space as a social theoretical concept. More typically, military history subordinates

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Dana Priest and William M. Arkin, *Top Secret America: The Rise of the New American Security State* (New York: Little, Brown and Co., 2011); Michael Sorkin, *Indefensible Space: The Architecture of the National Insecurity State* (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>4</sup> See Rajiv Chandrasekaran, *Imperial Life in the Emerald City: Inside Iraq's Green Zone* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006); Michael Schwartz, *War Without End: The Iraq War in Context* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2008).

occupation and logistics to narratives of conflict and movement, while social history of the home front treats economic and cultural effects of war in a unified national space.

Historians of the formation of the modern state over longer time periods have turned frequently to Foucault's concepts of *governmentality* and *biopower* to explain the homogenization of the power of the state, and its privatization, through spacial organization.<sup>5</sup> Henri Lefebvre has further challenged positivist conceptions of space in state and society. Lefebvre casts the violence of war in defense of state space as the defining characteristic of modern sovereignty. However, Lefebvre's belief that abstract, sovereign state space never fully succeeds at becoming homogenous, even under normal conditions, makes his writing a provocative lens for understanding the fictions of state space in both colonial regimes and in wartime.<sup>6</sup> The abstract concept of parallel spaces where war was sanctioned and where it was not sanctioned did not correspond easily to the actual microsocial spaces in which Egyptians had to negotiate their position and role in the war enterprise. Egypt was neither occupied by an enemy during the war nor was it an independent actor in defending its own national space. The spacial facts of war threatened to implode the diplomatic and legal definition of Egyptian sovereignty.

The British preference for organizing Egyptian space in the Second World War was a shift from its typical colonial mode of fiscal restraint and veiled influence. Besides the *sine qua non* aerial defense of the home front and general security measures across the Empire, from Dunkirk until D-Day, the British fought their war in the eastern Mediterranean. Situated at the center of sea, air and land transportation networks, Egypt

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<sup>5</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995); Foucault, "Governmentality".

<sup>6</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, OX, UK ; Cambridge, Mass., USA: Blackwell, 1991), 278-282.

had long been the planned backbone of any defense against Italian aggression. But Egypt was not naturally predisposed to host a mechanized air and tank war. The absolute importance of Egyptian territory, labor and supply to the British war effort made many of the logistical demands the British military could have made in Egypt politically embarrassing and inconvenient to British diplomats.

Just as the 1936 Anglo-Egyptian Treaty created the legal grounds for staging war, it also framed the space for both the British and Egyptian armies to conduct advantageous defensive battles against invading armies. As a treaty condition for Britain to move its forces out of the urban military bases in Alexandria, and in Cairo at Qasr al-Nil, Abbaseya and the Citadel, the Egyptians undertook in the treaty to provide land, build barracks with one quarter British financial support for new army bases at Ismailiya (a base that became known as “Moascar,” from “military camp” in Arabic) and at Geneifa southwest of the Great Bitter Lake on the Suez Canal for 10,000 troops and 4,000 civilian employees.<sup>7</sup> In the event, wartime personnel increases meant the British occupied both the old and new planned barracks, and these were merely the kernel of a much larger set of bases and aerodromes the British army built throughout the Canal Zone and desert east of al-Sharqiya, south of Alexandria, on the outskirts of Cairo, and sprinkled throughout the rest of Egypt (see map, Figure 3.5 below).

The concentration of British imperial manpower in such a relatively small place astonished even veteran officers, and it required the intensive use of Egyptian land.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> The Egyptians were allowed to charge rent for the civilian accommodation. The land that the Allied armies ultimately used beyond the treaty covenant was subject to complex contractual and rental negotiations, treated in Chapter 4. United Kingdom and Egypt, *Treaty of Alliance Between His Majesty, in Respect of the United Kingdom, and His Majesty the King of Egypt* (London: HM Stationary Office, 1937).

<sup>8</sup> General Sir Bernard Paget, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, British Troops in Egypt considered the base, “with its extensive depots, workshops, communications, and port facilities... probably unique in



From an existing level of around 20,000 troops mainly barracked at Abbaseyya and Alexandria in 1939, the number of troops in Egypt increased relatively slowly until the 1940 defeat in France, when Britain began reinforcing the Middle East heavily in anticipation of an Italian attack from Libya. The total size of the Middle East Force (MEF, which included forces in Palestine, Iraq, Sudan and Aden and, in particular, the campaigning forces in the Western Desert) rose from 120,000 troops in September 1940 at the average rate of 1,000 men and women per day to reach about 400,000 by July 1941. At this point, 164,000 Allied troops were garrisoned permanently in Egypt as a part of the British Troops in Egypt (BTE), a sub-command of the MEF.<sup>9</sup>

The MEF continued to grow to an estimated 800,000 troops, despite the capture of 30,000 prisoners at the fall of Tobruk in June 1942.<sup>10</sup> Nearly all of these men and women were stationed in Egypt between the first and second battles of El Alamein, July to November 1942, of whom 320,000 were the BTE garrison and HQ and more than 400,000 were part of the Eighth Army, of which roughly half comprised the fighting force fielded against the Axis at El Alamein and half support and logistics.<sup>11</sup> After General Montgomery and the Eighth Army left the Middle East command area, the BTE garrison became its largest element. Egypt remained the major staging ground for the battles for Italy, and it was the principal rest and recreation area for soldiers on leave.

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history.” Top Secret report, “The Middle East Base,” 27 Oct. 1944. Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Lindsell 2/3.

<sup>9</sup> Troop levels are difficult to calculate, because of the transitory nature of the army formations. Middle East Force estimations come from Ian Stanley Ord Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East: A History of the Second World War* (London: H. M. Stationery Off., 1954), Vol. 1, pp. 245-6, and Vol. 2, p. 233. In 1941, the British Troops in Egypt Deputy Director of Supply and Transport began keeping unified ration detailed feeding strength figures: WO 169/1029, BTE DDST War Diary, June 1941.

<sup>10</sup> WO 201/2339, Force Strengths and projections, Deputy Assistant Adjutant General. 1 Oct. 1941, 1 Mar. 1942.

<sup>11</sup> WO 201/2316, MEF 4 Paper No. 4, Lt. Col. Hoare, 27 Oct. 1942; WO 169/4324, BTE DDST Feeding Strengths, 14/15 Oct. 1942; Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East V.*, 4 p. 30.

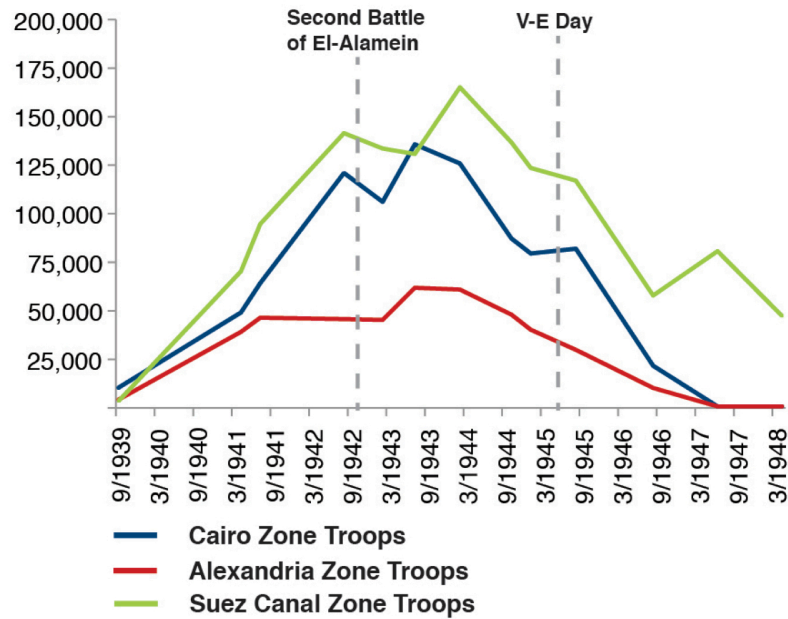


Figure 3.1. British Troops in Egypt (BTE) garrison force levels between 1939 and 1948. BTE feeding strength reports in WO 169/140 (28 Sep. 1939); WO 169/1029 (13 March, 1 June and 1 Sep. 1941); WO 169/4324 (15 Oct. 1942); WO 169/9019 (1 Mar. and 1 Sep. 1943); WO 169/15839 (1 Apr. and 5 Dec. 1944); 1069-19728 (13 Mar. and 31 Oct 1945); T 255-527 Finance for Troops in Egypt (1946-1948).

Troop levels continued to grow to 354,000 in April 1944. They declined only after the western European front opened, down to 254,000 in December 1944, and 238,000 by October 31, 1945.<sup>12</sup> Postwar reductions proceeded very slowly. 80,000 British soldiers remained in Egypt at the end of 1946 and 50,000 in mid-1948. Despite the efforts of the Treasury office to save money and reach the 10,000 man limit in the 1936 treaty, the complications of disposing of 1.3 million tons of war material worth £230 million delayed action.<sup>13</sup>

This astoundingly large number of troops had a significant impact on infrastructure and public life in the small settled area of the Nile Delta. By comparison, the British garrison in World War I peaked at 80,000 and declined to around 40,000 after Allenby and the Egyptian Expeditionary Force departed to the Levant in 1917; American

<sup>12</sup> BTE DDST feeding strength reports for 1 April 1944 and 15 Dec. 1944 (WO 169/15839) and 31 Oct. 1945 (WO 169/19728)

<sup>13</sup> T 255/527, Report of Sir Edward Bridges, 27 Aug. 1947; N.E. Young to C.E. Key, 5 Aug. 1948.

troop levels in the War in Iraq ranged between 130,000 and 160,000 from 2003 to 2008.<sup>14</sup>

The war also demanded a network of prison camps on the fringes of the delta to hold interned Axis citizens and prisoners of war, which were frequently built alongside the military camps to provide convenient guard labor. The canal zone prisons held 80,000 Italian POWs after the first invasion of Cyrenaica in 1941, and about 40,000 Germans, Italians and Libyans after El Alamein, who were transported to become a prison labor force throughout the British Empire.<sup>15</sup> In the aftermath of the victory in Europe, Egypt received nearly 200,000 Axis prisoners; part of the complications of reducing the British garrison in 1947 was dealing with the 80,000 prisoners that remained in the canal zone.<sup>16</sup>

Just as important to the British as well situated military bases were improved transportation and communication networks that could become dedicated supply and attack arteries during military operations. Put differently, if the 19<sup>th</sup> century cotton trade and European debt capital built the Egyptian railroad, this 20<sup>th</sup> century motorized war built Egypt's network of paved highways. At the time of the Abyssinian crisis in 1935, Egypt had merely 500 kilometers of paved road. This prompted the British to require the Egyptians in the 1936 Treaty to fund and construct the first paved desert six-meter highway in Egypt between the Giza pyramids and Alexandria to allow quick motor access to the western desert.<sup>17</sup> The poor quality of the original work done on this road required frequent maintenance and reconstruction, especially after the Battles of El Alamein, leading to an LE 75,000 disputed bill between the Egyptians and British with

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<sup>14</sup> WO 158/985 "Man-Power in Egypt" by Lt. Gen. H.M. Lawson, 14 July 1917, 33, 41.

<sup>15</sup> Bob Moore and Kent Fedorovich, *The British Empire and Its Italian Prisoners of War, 1940-1947* (Palgrave Macmillan: New York, 2002)

<sup>16</sup> T 255/527 C.E. Key to Blunt, 9 May 1947.

<sup>17</sup> NARA RG 59 883.154, 7 Dec 1935, Fish to State. The Egyptian State Railroads had long opposed investment in roads, fearing loss of revenues. Needless to say, the US oil and automotive industries were interested in Egypt's expanding highways.

the contractor Shell. In the following year, the British greatly expanded the defense road building program, following stringent construction standards mandated in the treaty. It included two major new paved highways, one between Cairo and Ismailiya and a second parallel to the Suez Canal, as well as paving the delta highway from Ismailiya to Alexandria via Zagazig, Tanta and Damansour and improving the Alexandria-Marsa Matruh, Cairo-Alexandria and Cairo-Suez roads. All treaty highways required bypasses around villages and bridges capable of bearing 30-ton vehicles.<sup>18</sup> The Egyptian government spent around LE 400,000 per year between 1937 and 1943 and diminishing amounts until the late 1940s on the treaty road building program.<sup>19</sup>

The roads became a crucial resource for the Allied military during the war, when Italian attacks rendered the Mediterranean and Suez Canal inaccessible, and troops and supplies needed to be moved from the Red Sea to the Western Desert. While the military continued to move supplies via the railroads, they had to do so under contract to Egyptian State Railways, which still had to carry passengers and commercial freight, although at a lower priority. The railroads were also easier targets for bombing attacks and continuously suffered from outdated rolling stock and coal shortages, since nearly all Egypt's coal was imported. Shell brought Egypt's first oil refinery online during the war, and supplies at Dhahran and Abadan were nearby, so the railways sponsored a series of coal-to-oil conversions for many of their engines.<sup>20</sup> Most importantly, the British could more completely monopolize the new highways for military traffic with the consent of the Egyptian authorities. This was certainly the case for the inland Suez Canal highway,

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<sup>18</sup> Kingdom and Egypt, *Treaty of Alliance*

<sup>19</sup> Egyptian State Budget for 1944-1945 (Cairo, Al-Maṭbaʿa Al-Amīriyya, 1944). This represented around 1% of the total annual state budgets of these years.

<sup>20</sup> NARA RG 59 883.6363/1-2946, Tuck to State, 29 January 1946.

which was built as a military alternative to the Canal company's own monopoly road bordering the Canal.<sup>21</sup> They also relied on the Cairo-Alexandria Desert road in emergencies like heavy air raids on Alexandria, when the fleeing civilian population choked the railroad and smaller roads to Damanhour.<sup>22</sup>

While the treaty designated the space for military operation and the capital outlays to transform it, the state of siege allowed Egyptian state sovereignty to trump British military authority in issues of jurisdiction of Egyptian subjects in British military zones. In the last of his first five military proclamations, 'Ali Mahir created three military zones in Cairo, Alexandria and the Suez Canal. He delegated his powers as Military Governor General to the respective governors to pass further proclamations to protect public security in force only within their boundaries. Before the state of siege was fully institutionalized prior to the entry of Italy to the war, General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Wavell was pushing heavily for zones of exclusive British martial jurisdiction, or at least jurisdiction over crimes against the British forces. Lampson agreed to push for expanded British military jurisdiction in the Alexandria and Canal military zones, but he preferred the Egyptian state of siege to continue as it was constructed under the current conditions, since it would simplify applying British martial law exclusively in these zones in case Egypt found itself at war or the state of siege "broke down."<sup>23</sup>

From 1940 to 1942 the British military produced multiple plans for running the country in case civil government fell apart, especially with an eye towards a scenario similar to the 1919 revolution. The British back-up plans extended to marshaling military

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<sup>21</sup> WO 201/2811, "Memo: Some notes of Strategic Roads by Mr. Llewellyn Bitumen & Asphalt Construction Dept's," 17 Jan. 1945.

<sup>22</sup> FO 141/854 "Memorandum for discussion by the Anglo-Egyptian Committee on the Evacuation of Civilians from Alexandria" 26 Aug., 1942.

<sup>23</sup> FO 371/24633, J 1409, Lampson to Wavell, 27 April 1940.

manpower to run the railroad system — one plan included a warning that “The local population in the BENHA - TANTA - ZAGAZIG is said to be more fanatical and more likely to give trouble than that in other districts.”<sup>24</sup> This planning peaked in the aftermath of the fall of Tobruk in May 1942, when the army prepared several secret plans to deny war supplies or Egyptian infrastructure to the enemy, by demolishing bridges, telephone cables, petroleum and water pumps and pipelines and electrical power stations, burning food and military stores and even wrecking irrigation works, against the anticipated resistance of the Egyptian Army itself!<sup>25</sup>

In the end, the British defenses remained intact and the nominal legal and physical boundaries between British and Egyptian authority proved more useful than coercion to the British army in maintaining Egyptian cooperation. This collaboration remained extremely sensitive, in particular because of the surveillance powers the British Military Mission had over the Egyptian army. Political narratives about the Egyptian military in the interwar period,<sup>26</sup> and the strife between the ministry of defense and general staff resulting from the King’s control over military promotions,<sup>27</sup> have been well researched. I will mention here only the functional role the Egyptian military played during the war. Egyptian military participation, normally circumscribed, became pragmatic and even

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<sup>24</sup> WO 201/2534 GHQ ME, “Memo: Internal Security Scheme EGYPT - April 1941... Maintenance of Essential Military Traffic,” amended, 28 Sept. 1941. These areas had witnessed some of the fiercest rioting in 1919.

<sup>25</sup> WO 921/25 “Demolitions in Egypt” Middle Eastern War Council. 15 July 1942; WO 201/2493, “Personal Notes, Alexandria” Lt. Col. J. Sargent, 59 CRE Works. 6 Dec 1942. They left the issue of planned compensation for such demolitions to the Foreign Office, which had to parse whether this deliberate sabotage was an immune “*effet de guerre*” under the Treaty of Versailles; they were planning to offer merely LE 50,000 for destroying the irrigation systems of Beheira. FO 371/31562, J 3241, Lampson to Foreign Office, 22 July 1942.

<sup>26</sup> See ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Bakr, *Al-Wujūd Al-Barīṭānī Fī Al-Jaysh Al-Miṣrī 1936-1947* (Al-Qāhira: Dār al-Ma‘ārif, 1982), Tripp, “Ali Maher and the Politics of the Egyptian Army”.

<sup>27</sup> British military intelligence uncovered the first anti-British officer conspiracies resulting from royal sponsorship and anti-Wafd sentiment in June 1942, but these did not spread beyond a few dozen junior officers before the war in Palestine. See FO 371-31561, J 2609, Sir Walter Monckton, “Reports received regarding the existence of a Secret association of Egyptian Army Officers,” 24 May 1942.

activist at the height of Axis attack. Lt. Gen. Marshall-Cornwall arrived to command the BTE on April 16, 1941, just as the Axis counterattack on Egypt was beginning. Marshall-Cornwall immediately sought to shore up the defense of the Delta from the threat of paratrooper assault or a desert attack skirting the major cities and requested manning Tanta and other regional centers with British units. Sadiq protested that no British troops should be posted outside British military bases or desert areas by prior agreement with the Commander of the Middle East Forces General Wavell.<sup>28</sup> Marshall-Cornwall politely backed down, but requested all the same to send parties to study routes across the Delta towards Tanta “as it cannot be foreseen how rapidly the threat of attack across the Delta may develop... so that there need be no delay once a decision has been taken to send troops there.”<sup>29</sup>

Later in the month, Sadiq had cause to complain about the process the British military was taking in requisitioning land for new bases, by applying to district officials rather than first asking the Ministry of Defense. This illustrates a competition between the Ministries of Interior and Defense for the ultimate authority over the use of eminent domain on Egyptian land. Marshall-Cornwall agreed to inform Sadiq first from then on.<sup>30</sup> Continued miscommunication over jurisdiction led to the Anglo-Egyptian gun battle cited at the beginning of the chapter. As late as 1942, the Egyptian army was still ironing out the extent of its responsibilities to defend territory under its jurisdiction in a memo to the chief of staff. While the principle of neutral Egypt firing anti-aircraft guns on bombers attacking its cities was internationally accepted, an Egyptian officer requested of Sadiq, how should Egyptian troops treat Axis soldiers paratroopers or frogmen who breached

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<sup>28</sup> DWQ 0076-000301, Sadiq to Marshall-Cornwall, 4 May 1941.

<sup>29</sup> DWQ 0076-000301, Marshall-Cornwall to Sadiq, 5 May 1941.

<sup>30</sup> DWQ 0076-000301, Sadiq to Marshall-Cornwall, 14 May 1941.

the outer British defenses around settled land?<sup>31</sup> Because of the rarity and variety of such incidents, these questions were only ever answered on a case-by-case basis. The nascent Egyptian Royal Air Force had more leeway to break the aforementioned boundaries between the military forces. Egyptian squadrons flew in formation with the British in patrols over the Red Sea from Suez and Almaza in 1940-41 to protect shipping during the battles against the Italians in East Africa; to maintain the fiction of Egyptian neutrality, these were officially deemed “training runs.” Although the Egyptians quashed the desire of the British Royal Air Force to enlist Egyptian pilots directly into the RAF, around 20 Egyptian pilots actually flew British planes in delivery convoys to the Italian front in 1943 and 1944.<sup>32</sup>

Tensions extended to the social spaces of the army as well. Inter-services cooperation between the Egyptians and British usually went smoothly, but there was a fair share of animosity. For example, a brawl at the Ismailiya government employees’ club in January 1942 was started by a drunk coterie of British intelligence officers who insulted two Egyptian officers and then proceeded to beat them when they talked back. When informed that one of the soldiers they were beating was wearing the uniform of a captain, one British officer declared, “If he were a colonel, then I would beat him twice as hard!” General Basset, British Commanding Officer for the Canal Zone, contacted the Egyptians’ commanding officer to apologize personally.<sup>33</sup> The murkiness of public authority for on-duty officers, especially in urban areas, could lead to conflict between

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<sup>31</sup> DWQ 0076-000307, Memo by Qaimaqam Ahmad Bey Fu’ad Sadiq to the Minister of Defense, 6 Aug. 1942.

<sup>32</sup> FO 371/31561, J 2507, Squadron Leader S.N. Shone to British Embassy, 27 May 1942; Lon O. Nordeen and David Nicolle, *Phoenix Over the Nile: A History of Egyptian Air Power 1932-1994* (Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1996), 45, 57-58.

<sup>33</sup> DWQ 0076-001742, Captain ‘Ali el-Burini to Egyptian War Intelligence, 9 Jan 1942.



the services. On March 30, 1942, an Indian army truck driver delivering supplies to Qasr al-Nil Barracks rear-ended an Egyptian motorcyclist on Fuad I street a few hundred meters from the barracks in the early evening, knocking him unconscious. Rather than waiting to fill paperwork with the Egyptian police traffic officer who approached the truck, the driver and two passengers, all Indian soldiers, came down from the truck and beat up the officer. They escaped into the barracks before more Egyptians could arrive.<sup>34</sup> The BTE command soon restricted military traffic to a few main roads to prevent events like this from happening more frequently.<sup>35</sup>

Even after the Egyptians fulfilled most of their commitments to the treaty building program outlined above, much of the negotiation over spacial authority and privileges frequently turned on both parties' financial limitations. This was an old habit of colonial administration that harked back to the fiscal tightness of the Cromer administration (1883-1907). The British demanded concessions for on-duty officers to ride the state railroad for free, and yet balked when it came to offering local British military units to help clear air-raid damage to railway installations for free.<sup>36</sup> The Egyptian army reported that by 1942, the value of labor done for the British in building defense emplacements and warehouses, paving airstrips and roads, and assembling a squadron of tanks, equalled LE 136,000.<sup>37</sup> The British, for their part, extracted an additional commitment of LE 250,000 from the Egyptian Government for defense measures that it would selectively credit to building works that would become permanent features of Egypt's defense

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<sup>34</sup> DWQ 0073-005234, Cairo police secret political report 705, 31 Mar. 1942.

<sup>35</sup> WO 123/439 BTE Command Orders, 6 Oct. 1942.

<sup>36</sup> The Foreign Office decided in the end only to charge for material used, not labor, but only after affirming that in crown colonies and mandates, a more precise accounting method be used. FO 371/31561, Scrivener to Lampson, 13 May 1942.

<sup>37</sup> DWQ 0075-000303, memorandum from Egyptian Army Engineering Staff, 13 Dec. 1942.

infrastructure after the war.<sup>38</sup> Even when combined with Egyptian state liability to British military supply (most of which was re-claimed for the duration of the Second World War), the British debt to the Egyptians in non-convertible pounds sterling was orders of magnitude larger. Not surprisingly, both sides resisted settling these accounts until the war was long over.

Anglo-Egyptian cooperation in matters of policing and intelligence remained functional throughout the war, but it was not free from political infighting between Egyptian bureaucrats and politicians, and indeed the British military and diplomatic establishment, as the Egyptian state began to restrict the access of former colonial administrators. In his unpublished memoirs, Brigadier Robert J. Maunsell, who was appointed a Defense Security Officer in 1932 and rose to become the head of the unified military intelligence service Security Intelligence Middle East (SIME) in 1940, recounts the transfer of power from the last British Interior officials to the Egyptians in 1937: “During the long-drawn-out treaty negotiations, DSO Egypt visited the European Department of the Ministry of the Interior two or three times a week, armed with a capacious brief-case which various British officials helped to fill with files, or extracts of files, dealing with subjects or persons of security interest — or thought to be so. This 'documentation' was a useful adjunct to existing records at GSI BTE, and thus the Defence Security Office Egypt did not have to start from scratch. At the same time, contact with the Egyptian Under-Secretary of State for the Interior, Hassan Rifa‘at Pasha, who gave us the absolutely full measure of help throughout the war, and with the Egyptian secret police was closely maintained so that when the Treaty was finally signed,

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<sup>38</sup> FO 371/41313, J 958, Killearn to El-Nahhas, 23 Feb. 1944.

there was virtually no break in Anglo-Egyptian co-operation on the security front.”<sup>39</sup>

When he wrote this memoir in the 1960s, Maunsell remained blithely confident that his organization had been able both to suppress Axis espionage during the war, and effectively control the Egyptian security establishment at arm’s length. Hasan Rifa‘at, a figure infrequently noted in Egyptian histories of the period despite his long tenure as director of public security during the First World War and as first permanent secretary of the Ministry of Interior from 1935 through 1948, appears frequently in the British diplomatic record both to provide them with intelligence and to bargain for British support for himself.<sup>40</sup> Most of the time, when Rifa‘at was coordinating his administrative goals along the dictates of British security requirements in ways the sitting governments agreed with, including the Wafd, they had little complaint about his well-known connection to the embassy. Ministers of Interior came and went, but it was understood that the special British relationship with Rifa‘at and his informants was sacrosanct. For example, it was only in October 1944 when al-Nahhas sought to remove Rifa‘at’s director of public security, Mahmoud al-Ghazzali Bey, for taking down banners praising al-Nahhas at the command of the King, that the British finally withdrew their support for the Wafd party and King Faruq dissolved its government.<sup>41</sup> But even the King did not wish to challenge Interior’s structural prerogatives: According to Sadat’s early memoir, when King Faruq was considering conspiring with the Muslim Brotherhood in early 1945, the King scolded Sadat for talking about this on the phone, remarking that “Hasan

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<sup>39</sup> IWM Archive, Personal Papers of Brigadier RJ Maunsell, 80/30/1

<sup>40</sup> FO 371/45925, J 2488, Confidential Print on Egyptian Personalities, forwarded 29 Aug. 1945. *Al-Ithnein wal-Dunya* called Rifa‘at one of the most powerful men in Egypt in a classic newsmagazine “top ten” list: “The Ten Most Powerful Men in Egypt,” *Al-Ithnein wal-Dunya*, 27 Apr. 1942.

<sup>41</sup> See FO 141/937, file 1/15/44, Terence Shone to FO, 6 Oct., 1944.

Rifa‘at taps my phone.”<sup>42</sup> However, much of the intelligence that Rifa‘at brought the British, while useful, reveals he was not as fully in control of the security forces as his self-image implied. In particular, the strength of the Wafd administration allowed al-Nahas to isolate Rifa‘at from his own bureaucracy. Rifa‘at sent the British a long memorandum in early 1944 complaining “Village ghaffirs, omdahs and sheikhs, municipal workers, officials high and low, have been subjected to a regime of oppression and persecution and have been replaced by open supporters of the [Wafd] party,” and referring to “the case of the Minister of Interior [Fu‘ad Sirag Ed-Din] trying to bring the police into party politics.”<sup>43</sup> Later that year during the fight over the Wafd’s internment of political opponents, al-Ghazzali complained of being excluded from the decisions of “Nahas’ gestapo” under the command of Amin Khalil, a party lieutenant without an official Interior position.<sup>44</sup>

The independent action of the Egyptian security apparatus was not always a matter of direct confrontation. Rather, the constant bureaucratic friction resulting from the different spacial logic of British and Egyptian jurisdictions prevented the British from exercising the control they assumed they would have. Miralai Selim Zaki, as Vice Commandant and highest ranking Egyptian officer of the Cairo Police in 1940, oversaw the expansion of the intelligence wing of the police into the Special Branch (*Al-Qism al-Makhṣuṣ*), which began writing up much more detailed reports than in previous agencies.<sup>45</sup> Of the large body of these reports available from 1940 to 1942 at the Egyptian National Archives, before the Wafd further reorganized the organization and the file unit

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<sup>42</sup> Al-Sadat, *Asrār Al-Thawrah*, 141.

<sup>43</sup> FO 141/937, 1/5/44, Hassan Rifa‘at to Walter Smart, 8 Mar. 1944.

<sup>44</sup> FO 141/941, 71/58/44 Walter Smart memo, 21 June 1944.

<sup>45</sup> ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Bakr, *Al-Būlīs Al-Miṣrī: 1922-1952* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1988), 295.

ends, the majority is in Arabic, but there is a separate series of English reports.<sup>46</sup> Not surprisingly, daily Arabic police reports (sometimes more than a dozen per day) focus on domestic political issues, most predominantly the activities of the parties in opposition. Increasingly, informants infiltrated the meetings of Islamist parties and labor unions. Other Arabic reports also include surveillance and arrest reports about possible Axis spies. The English language reports, which Zaki wrote personally, are almost entirely about the activities of the expatriate communities of the Axis nations, the activities of particular propagandists and potential spies, and the status of the community's internment, education and welfare.<sup>47</sup> This helps explain why Maunsell was satisfied with the cooperation of the Egyptian Interior Ministry but the British embassy so frequently was not: military intelligence took precedence over domestic intelligence, and the Egyptians were happier to assist in the former venture than the latter. As a result, the Arabic language reports contain information about the radical nationalist and labor movements at a level of detail that simply does not exist in British embassy reports of this period. While it was certainly possible for British diplomats to gather information about the new radical movements through other avenues, it is evident Egyptian intelligence was not strictly beholden to their needs and prerogatives.

## VIOLATIONS OF MILITARY SPACE

Maintaining the functional, financial, jurisdictional distinctions between Egyptian and British forces was difficult enough, but British military space was also extremely porous to Egyptian civilians. The British kept camps near urban areas so they would be

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<sup>46</sup> DWQ, Unit 73, Reports of the Political Police.

<sup>47</sup> DWQ 0073-005023, 005025 and 005030.

accessible both to water and supplies and to their low-cost Egyptian workforce. By the peak years of 1942-43 the British would estimate as many as 250,000 Egyptians were employed by the Allied Forces. The constant transit of Egyptian workers in proximity to plentiful military supplies led to endemic theft. “Looting of WD stores was a perpetual menace,” remarked a junior officer at a camp south of Isma‘iliya. “‘Compared to the Egyptian,’ he quoted his Commander-in-Chief, ‘the vulture is a bungling amateur.’ Particularly sought were Army tents, which reappeared in the sails of the feluccas that made their stately progress along the Sweetwater canal.”<sup>48</sup>

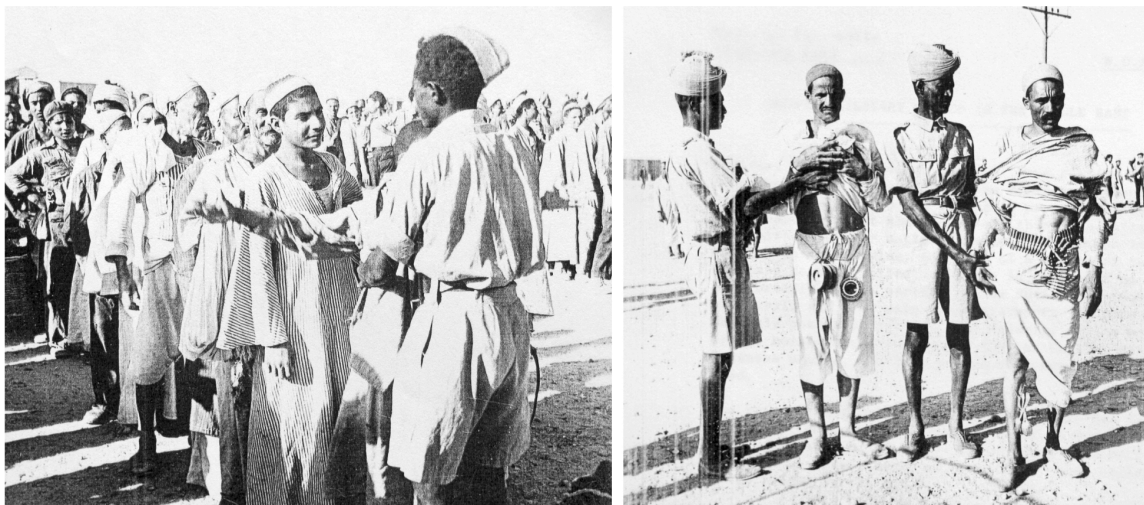
Egyptian military proclamations early on criminalized civilian trespassing in military zones, including camps, ports, certain bridges and roads, without authorization, such as a work license. Fines for infringement ranged from 25 to 100 piasters, several days’ wages for most unskilled laborers. Wearing a British military uniform without authorization also carried a one to two pound fine. For large workshops like those at the Royal Engineers Base 2 near Al-Tel Al-Kabir, Egyptian workers lined up at the beginning and end of shifts for full body searches.<sup>49</sup> (See Figure 3.2) The most popular items from camps on the black market were high-value, light and fungible commodities like matches, army blankets, tea, cigarettes and electrical wire. Because of a rubber shortage, tires were extremely valuable on the black market, but were molded with identifying marks and easily recovered by the army. BTE officials estimated their gross losses to pilferage in Egypt overall at 70 tons per month in 1943.

By 1942, petty theft cases were coming to the military courts at a rate of 50 cases per month in Alexandria and Al-Sharqiya, where the largest concentration of troops were

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<sup>48</sup> IWM Archive, personal papers of Maj. J.H. Money, 96/44/2.

<sup>49</sup> IWM Photo Archive,



*Figure 3.2. Security operations at No. 5 Base Ordnance Depot, Al-Tal Al-Kabir, July 16, 1943. Indian military police officers catch two Egyptian laborers at attempting to steal ammunition and other goods during a routine search before the laborers leave for the day. IWM photo archives, E25780, E 25782.*

stationed.<sup>50</sup> Conviction of theft from military camps in Egyptian military court always resulted in a prison term, usually one to three months among most summary cases. Cases of pilferage could escalate quickly into gun battles with more serious consequences if the perpetrators were well armed and caught in the act. Sayyid ‘Abdu, a 19-year-old peasant from Al-Sharqiya, was spotted stealing sacks of flour from a train outside Isma‘iliya with four others at 5 a.m. on February 21, 1942, and opened fire on the Egyptian guards who advanced on the group.<sup>51</sup> The guards fired back and wounded ‘Abdu, but his confederates got away; ‘Abdu was sentenced to five years in prison. Ahmad Makki, a 22-year-old Egyptian army soldier was caught in a similar situation stealing electrical equipment with another soldier. When chased by the police, they fired back and fled, but his partner was crushed to death by a moving train; for the combination of offenses Makki received 15 years in prison.<sup>52</sup>

Perhaps the most highly-valued item from military camps were firearms, ammunition and explosives. Clamping down on the secondary market for weapons to

<sup>50</sup> Based on DWQ 0081-030436, Military Court Registers Sept.-Dec. 1942.

<sup>51</sup> DWQ 0081-030607, Military Felony 450 for 1942, Isma‘iliya.

<sup>52</sup> DWQ 0081-030610 Military Felony 212 for 1944, report of 4 June 1944.

ensure civil security was more important to the British than simply punishing the theft of those weapons. The British constantly harped on the Egyptians to more vigorously enforce state of siege legislation against the private trade in arms that had existed since the beginning of the war. In May 1940, 'Ali Mahir imposed a stringent licensing regime on all weapons, even large knives, and by the time the military governor's records start, the military courts were hearing dozens of cases a week on unlicensed weaponry. Simple possession of knives or firearms brought a fine that increased on volume and by weapon type from 50 piastres to cases with a total of LE 70; only about 15% of cases in 1942 resulted in jail sentences, with an average of two to three months.<sup>53</sup> A large majority of these cases, disproportionate to population and all other types of military crime, occurred in Upper Egypt. While this may reflect a cultural preference among the peasants in that area towards gun ownership, the large numbers were likely a result of the British belief in such a stereotype, and their pressure on the Egyptian administrators to crack down in this area. By 1944, the British believed there to be 200,000 unlicensed firearms across the country, concentrated in Upper Egypt, obtained from military camps and other sources. They persuaded the Egyptians to launch a one month amnesty period, in which gun owners could turn in unlicensed weaponry and even license new weapons (within the strict requirements). Upon the failure of this scheme to bring in many weapons, the British military decided to start a program in to pay 20 piaster rewards for information leading to the recovery of weapons, and buy back stolen pistols and rifles at their nominal price, specifically in Upper Egypt.<sup>54</sup> This had little success, and constant surveillance of

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<sup>53</sup> Based on DWQ 0081-030436 Military Court Registers Sept.-Dec. 1942.

<sup>54</sup> They budgeted LE 1000, and the Egyptian Interior Ministry contributed LE 2000, but a year later "only small rewards made from Brit. Army funds". FO 371/41412 J2063 G.O.C.-in-C. to War Office (copy) January 30, 1945.



the gun trade and military trials seemed to make the only impact. These weapons invariably made their way into the hands of radical groups, including the secret apparatus of the Muslim Brotherhood, which committed several assassinations and attempted assassinations over the course of the late 1940s.

Many of the new restrictions on the use of space did not come into effect without disruption and miscommunication. Within days of the military orders against approaching bridges in boats after sunset in 1940, Egyptian police guards twice opened fire on skiffs and feluccas in Cairo that approached Ismailia and Qasr El Nil bridges without stopping to identify themselves when demanded — including a launch belonging to King Faruq's yacht.<sup>55</sup> Egyptian soldiers shot and killed a British major in the RASC who was boating on the Nile as he approached the bridge later in the week.<sup>56</sup> The security paranoia about bridges in particular led to proclamations restricting the photography of bridges and even preventing civilians from crossing the Nile Barrages (irrigation dams north of Cairo at the divide between the Rosetta and Damietta branches of the Nile) at night without a permit. The photography restriction, which remains in Egypt to this day on military installations, garnered little respect. Even Allied soldiers, who were enthusiastic tourists when on leave, found this requirement impossible, judging by the repeated exhortation in British Troops in Egypt general orders not to take pictures of the Nile or important buildings. Eventually, the BTE restricted development of all soldiers' film to one approved photo lab under strict censorship in each major city in Egypt.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> DWQ 0073-005156, police secret political reports 1443, 27 May 1940, 1538, 7 June 1940, and the Royal launch episode, report 1413, 23 May 1940.

<sup>56</sup> WO 169/140 Diary HQ BTE Director of Supply and Transport, 17 June 1940.

<sup>57</sup> WO 123/438, British Troops in Egypt General Orders, 15 July 1941.

The state of siege also increased the severity of punishments during crucial military *time*: namely, during air raids on urban areas. State of siege legislation considered Egyptians who took advantage of the cover of blackout to steal property from civilians who had departed for air raid shelters without locking their homes and apartments greater than usual threat to public order and security. As such, they were liable to severe penalties in military court. For example, in 1942, ‘Abd al-Moneim Tantawi, 25, received three years imprisonment for stealing clothing from an empty house during an air raid and Muhammad ‘Abd el Hadi al-Sharif, 18, also received three years for attempting to steal earrings from a woman in a darkened air raid shelter.<sup>58</sup> The severity of many of these sentences for very minor and often squalid offenses are surprising when compared to the more lenient punishments leveled against some black marketeers.

Interactions between Egyptian civilians and Allied soldiers were heavily circumscribed by state of siege regulations and therefore frequently subject to military court jurisdiction. The authorities made constant attempts both to provide positive public events where soldiers and civilians could socialize, like shared religious celebrations with Egyptian and Indian muslims and to promote positive relations in every possible medium, including radio and newsmagazines.<sup>59</sup> However, the default official attitude to the individuals who crossed the fictional boundaries between military and civilian space was suspicion. Certainly, some Egyptians viewed western soldiers as wealthy marks from

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<sup>58</sup> DWQ 0081-030607 Alexandria Military Felony 391 for 1942 for ‘Abdel Moneim Tantawi; 0081-030437 Alexandria Military Felony 361 for 1942 for Muhammad ‘Abd el Hadi Al-Sharif.

<sup>59</sup> For example, “Men of the War celebrate the ‘Eid” 13 Jan. 1941, “Visits of the British Army in the Middle East,” Radio Masri, 21 June 1941. The article “I was not considered a Foreigner,” Al Ithnayn Wal-Dunya, 16 Mar. 1942, actually uses photos of smiling Egyptian sweet potato vendors posing with British soldiers — sent to Egyptian media by the War Office (IWM photography archive, E 8818 entitled “Making Friends with the Natives”)

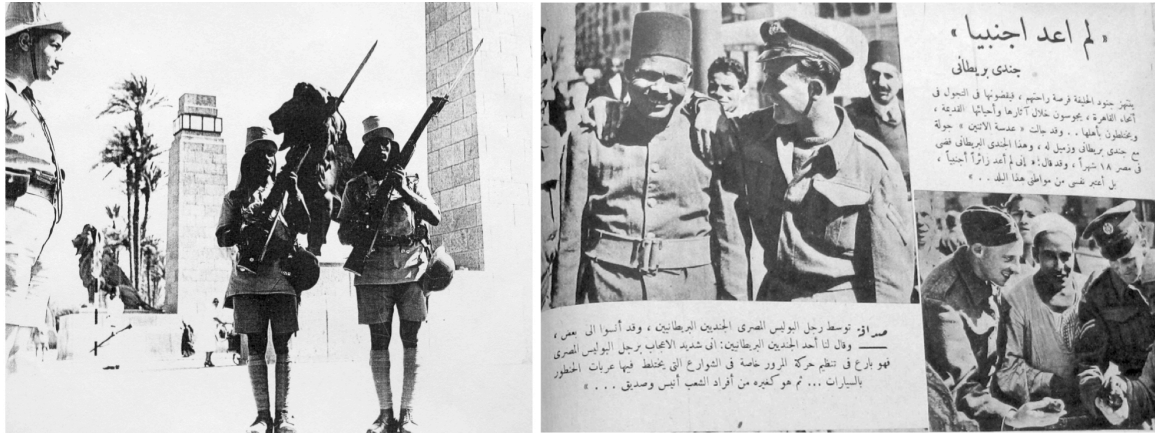


Figure 3.3. Egyptian and British soldiers descended on Cairo. (R) Egyptian soldiers on sentry duty in front of Qasr al-Nil Bridge shortly after Italy entered the war. The War Office caption reads "All bridges in Egypt are guarded by Egyptain solders against invasion, and the River Nile is patrolled by armed motor launches." IWM photo archive, E 154, June 6, 1940. (L) This propaganda article, "I was not Considered a Foreigner" used photos of British soldiers and Egyptians getting along supplied by a British War Office photographer who posed them on Feb. 24, 1942. (IWM photo archive, E 8813). The article was published in *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya* on March 16, 1942.

which to beg or to sell goods — or to rob. Naturally, most robberies took place near to military bases, typically in urban areas at night. Groups of young men preyed on lone soldiers in the darker corners of cities, overwhelming them by numbers: Hasan ‘Abd al-‘Aziz and al-Sayyid ‘Abdu Yass, 20 and 17-year-old coppersmiths, respectively, were the only two of seven individuals who a mugged British soldier that the soldier could identify. They were sentenced to three years with labor for aggravated assault with a knife.<sup>60</sup> Cases frequently foundered on too little evidence when the soldier in question was the only witness.<sup>61</sup> The military court case descriptions reveal that many incidents were not simply anonymous street muggings. Rather, Egyptians frequently interacted socially with the soldiers to some extent, drinking together at a bar, or promising to find them prostitutes and then taking their valuables, after an altercation or by prior plan. Judges handed down more severe sentences in these cases, typically five years

<sup>60</sup> DWQ 0081-030607, Military Felony 302 for 1942, report of 20 Jan. 1943.

<sup>61</sup> For example, Sayyid Osman, a 15-year-old salesboy tried to take an Indian soldier's wallet on June 5 1942, was ruled innocent because of the weakness of the evidence. DWQ 0081-030607, Military Felony 388 for 1942.

imprisonment.<sup>62</sup> While the British were involved in the creation of Egyptian military proclamations, and frequently referred Egyptian suspects to the state of siege military justice system through their Military Police or the remaining few British officers in the urban police forces, they usually remained distant from the operation of the military parquet and courts. In some cases of theft in the British camps, the proceedings seem to indicate a disagreement or discipline issue between Egyptian worker and soldier that escalated to a charge brought by the British MPs. Ahmad Gharib ‘Abd al-Rahman, a 32-year-old camp worker in Suez, was accused in military court of robbing cigarettes and a pipe from a British soldier but was ruled innocent when several co-workers testified that the soldier had traded with him for the tobacco prior to the incident.<sup>63</sup>

The British military also instituted a spatial disciplinary regime for soldiers on leave as much to protect them from becoming the targets of crime as to prevent them from misbehaving. Soldiers arriving in Cairo were required to turn over rifles and all other weapons at the Bab al-Hadid military prison adjacent to the central railway station. Many drunken soldiers ended their evening in one of the retaining cells there if picked up by the Egyptian or British military police.<sup>64</sup> Cairo was carved into three parallel zones for the troops: approved hotels, bars and cabarets, where prices and quality were guaranteed, off-limits areas, which included nearly all parts of the city not in Khedive Isma‘il’s modern city center, and unapproved locales downtown where troops were allowed but

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<sup>62</sup> DWQ 0081-030607, Higher Military court case 264 for 1942; 0081-30610 Case no. 1975 Cairo for 1944; Case no. 309 Heliopolis for 1944. British defense security officer Albert Sansom claims he broke up a similar prostitution ring that was targeting officers, who were too ashamed to report being robbed after visiting the brothel in question. Sansom, *I Spied Spies*

<sup>63</sup> DWQ 0081-030607, military felony 178/1942, Suez.

<sup>64</sup> Sgt. S.J. Morris served as a sentry at Bab el-Hadid in 1941, and said “The prisoner was simply dumped on wooden boards and left to sober up. The nights were often bitterly cold and one man did in fact get pneumonia and die a few days later...” Imperial War Museum Archive, Personal Papers of S.J. Morris

could risk unexpected encounters with the locals.<sup>65</sup> Space for soldiers was further subdivided by rank and class: only officers were permitted to take rooms at the elite Shepherd's hotel; the other ranks had to make do with hostels.

Restrictions on vice increased over the course of the war. *Wish al-Birka*, a street running due north of Ezbekiya Gardens, was the legal, licensed red light district for the first half of the war. Nearly all soldiers on leave had an encounter there, although many came just to look, and many disapproved of what they saw for a variety of reasons. The British military medical staff did its best to get visitors to visit the nearby "hygiene museum" before deciding whether to head to a brothel.<sup>66</sup> In 1942, the Wafd government closed all licensed brothels altogether, citing increased violence in Wish al-Birka and high rates of venereal disease. It was also done as a political favor to the Muslim Brotherhood.<sup>67</sup> However, prostitution merely spread to smaller operations in the inner suburbs of Cairo and Alexandria, areas not difficult for motivated soldiers to travel to and not as easy for the police to monitor.<sup>68</sup> Servicemen were also restricted from drinking alcohol in civilian areas to between the hours of 6 and 10 pm, but this also frequently had the effect of pushing them to speakeasies that served drinks of questionable and even dangerous quality, as well as harder stuff like hashish and opium. The police marked a pronounced increase in drug confiscation, from 1,900 kilograms in 1939 to 4,000 kilos in

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<sup>65</sup> Artemis Cooper, *Cairo in the War: 1939-1945* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1989), 113-117.

<sup>66</sup> IWM Archive, Personal papers of J.H. Witte, 87/12/1.

<sup>67</sup> Cooper, *Cairo in the War*, 116. On the shaky relationship between the Wafd and Muslim Brotherhood, see Mitchell, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers*, 27.

<sup>68</sup> Military court records reveal that families, often dominated by a matriarch who prostituted herself or her daughters and her friends, ran many of these brothels. Judges had difficulty winning convictions in these cases because Allied soldier clients were usually unwilling to testify. DWQ 0081-030607, military felonies 370, 376, 411, 484, 516 for 1943.

1942, in particular from Allied servicemen who were smuggling them usually from service further east in Iran or India.<sup>69</sup>

Intoxicated or provoked soldiers engaged frequently in more serious or violent criminal behavior. In his memoir, Captain J.B. Tomlinson reminisced about “the Battle of Cairo.” He and “several hundred” men from his division were on leave in Cairo in 1944 after fighting in Italy for several months. Sexually frustrated by the rejection of the women’s auxiliary members (who he claims were “warned off” by the non-combatant male clerical officers based in Cairo), they went on a rampage through Khan al-Khalili when they felt the vendors were cheating them. The BTE command took pains to cover up the incident.<sup>70</sup> The Egyptian police better recorded British violence targeting the elite. On July 26, 1941, two British soldiers broke into and looted the house of Hassan Mazlum in downtown Cairo.<sup>71</sup> Even more serious, a group of five drunk British soldiers attacked Mustafa al-Nahhas’ residence in Heliopolis on October 10, 1941. They smashed open the door to the front room of the mansion and roughed up two of al-Nahhas’ servants, demanding water to drink and “a girl.” The Egyptian police investigated the incident, found no political aspect to it, and forwarded their report to the British military police; the most the Egyptians could do was post a permanent guard at al-Nahhas’ house.<sup>72</sup> Hyperactive soldiers on duty could also inflict accidental injuries and death on nearby civilians. On December 1, 1942, British soldiers returning from the Western Desert

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<sup>69</sup> ‘Abd al-Wahhāb Bakr, *Al-Būlīs Al-Miṣrī: 1922-1952* (Cairo: Maktabat Madbūlī, 1988), 283.

<sup>70</sup> Tomlinson claims the event was suppressed in the newsmedia and does not appear in any Egyptian sources, IWM Archive, personal papers of J.W. Tomlinson. R.L. Crimp also complained of the neglect of the enlisted British women: “In Cairo’s dearth of feminine society, except with the worst on a strict cash basis, you’d think they’d give the squaddies a bit of their company. But lord, no. They’re at a premium and know it. Nothing under two pips is good enough. Drinking at Shepherd’s and dancing at Groppi’s is just the job... What flawless paragons of military-caste virtue! How inflexibly rigid and frigid!” IWM Archive, private papers of R.L. Crimp.

<sup>71</sup> DWQ 0073-005204, Cairo Police secret political report 1433, 26 July 1941.

<sup>72</sup> DWQ 0073-005207, Cairo Police secret political report 2130, 11 Oct. 1941.

tossed some of their captured Axis smoke bombs at a group of Fuad I University students waiting for the bus as they passed in a troop transport. In the stampede that ensued, one student struck his head on the pavement and later died from the injury. (As this was a public daytime incident with many witnesses, rather than attempting to suppress the news, al-Nahhas staged an elaborate funeral with a staged British apology in order to placate the students.)<sup>73</sup>

In accordance with the Anglo-Egyptian treaty, British soldiers were tried on criminal charges in their regimental courts martial, and their families and civilian workers in the army were subject to a special British consular tribunal. This fact made it much harder for Egyptians robbed or killed by soldiers to obtain justice. A fight between uniformed Allied soldiers and Egyptians in which both parties were wronged was therefore sorted out in two separate, sometimes distant, courts where the opposing sides would not frequently appear to give testimony against the other, resulting frequently in acquittals. Off-duty soldiers not in uniform could still be tried in courts martial but were not immune from civil suits in the Egyptian Mixed courts. The western embassies fielded many complaints of this sort, like one from Greek lawyer Michael Syriotis to the American embassy in 1943 asking for instructions to prosecute an American engineer working for the army who allegedly assaulted his two clients, Greek employees of the Metropolitan Hotel.<sup>74</sup> The British army eventually accepted that, although it had no legal liability in these cases, it was politically expedient to settle the cases with small payments to the claimants, frequently bar owners with smashed windows.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> NARA RG 59, 883.00/1310, Kirk to State, 6. Dec. 1942.

<sup>74</sup> NARA, RG 84, 820.03 Michael Syriotis to Kirk, 13 Mar. 1943.

<sup>75</sup> FO 371/31561, J 2083, Scrivener to Lampson, recommending he discuss the matter further with President of the War Claims Commission, 23 June 1942.

The racial logic behind the responsibilities and placement of British, Dominion and Colonial troops in the Imperial military also had an impact on their respective interactions with Egyptians. Except select groups of Indian soldiers (the so-called martial races such as Punjabis and Pashtuns), nearly all colonial troops recruited after the start of the war were preferred for “pioneer” labor corps in rear areas, although many ended up fighting when manpower needs demanded it. These laboring groups included Palestinians, other Arabs from British mandates, and “natives” of West, East and South Africa. British military administrators assigned them to a very detailed pseudoscientific hierarchy of capacities. These latter groups were recruited most intensively in 1942 and their numbers increased from a very low level to nearly 50,000 troops, or one-sixth of the Egyptian garrison. The MEF adjutant general staff commented on the inversion of the colonial order this represented: “While non-European troops are serving in the Army they must necessarily have privileges that are not normally given them. For example, many African races are not permitted to carry arms in their own countries, and yet must be armed for their own protection when serving in the Army.”<sup>76</sup>

As investigated by Eve Troutt Powell, the meaning of race between Egyptians and black Africans had a complex history.<sup>77</sup> Egypt still contested the “condominium” sovereignty it had shared with Britain since 1898 over Sudan. The slave trade from Sudan had been outlawed for decades, but many Sudanese servants in the households of the Egyptian elite were former slaves or descendants of slaves. That the British put Sudanese in positions of legitimately violent authority over Egyptians was particularly rankling to

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<sup>76</sup> WO 201/2339, “Memo: Manpower-MEF” Col. JEC McCandlish, Assistant Deputy Adjutant General, MEF, 23 May 1942.

<sup>77</sup> Eve Troutt Powell, *A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).



the Egyptian police. East African soldiers ended up disproportionately on guard duty at camps and on railway cars. Faced with endemic looting from military stores, these troops were required to fire upon looters if they did not stop when commanded. Incidents during which black guards shot and killed Egyptians on the railway accelerated over the course of 1943. After six in December alone, the Egyptian Railway Police issued a protest that Minister of Interior Fu'ad Sirag Al-Din forwarded to the British Embassy. The Egyptians killed were in all cases themselves railway guards or workers who the British claimed were taking advantage of their access to pilfer goods. The railway police claimed these men were innocent; more significantly, the language of their protests projects the cause of the incidents onto the race of the guards. The Mamour Zapt (detective) of the railway police complained of "African black troops... the class of troops who are so silly and brutal as to fire and kill 3 policemen in less than 10 days;" Sirag ad-Din repeated the allegation that "the continuance of this brutal murdering of innocent policemen... may lead to the most deplorable results... I hope that you will take the most drastic measures against the black troops concerned."<sup>78</sup>

Isolated black African Allied soldiers were subject in particular to abuse by crowds of Egyptian children and beggars. A Sudanese sergeant commanding a squad of Sudanese and other East Africans on a rail convoy through upper Egypt reported his men were mobbed by poor Egyptians demanding to buy army rations or blankets from the cars. When refused, crowds turned ugly and threw rocks and bottles, cursing the soldiers as "black slaves," which the soldiers "endured with forbearance."<sup>79</sup> When off duty, it was also easier for non-white troops to break out-of-bounds rules and visit the "native"

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<sup>78</sup> The police and ministry reports are in the British embassy translation within a report made from Killearn to El-Nahhas to explain the British side. FO 371/41313, J 958, 23 Feb. 1944.

<sup>79</sup> FO 371/41314, J 2807, Killearn to El-Nahhas, 30 July 1944.

quarters, where they were subject to the usual or sometimes aggravated forms of hostility. For example, a fight between three African-American soldiers and an Egyptian crowd in Port Said in early 1943 resulted in the death of an Egyptian. This led directly to the American military negotiating for the same types of criminal immunity for its troops as the British troops and their families enjoyed under the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty.<sup>80</sup>

## PUBLIC SHELTERS TO PUBLIC HOUSING

Epidemic disease killed tens and possibly hundreds of thousands of Egyptians between 1939 and 1945.<sup>81</sup> However, the novelty, suddenness and spectacular physical destruction of Italian and German air raids on Cairo, Alexandria and the Suez Canal made them the most explicit threat to public security during the war, both to the Egyptian government and in the public imagination. Between Italy's entry to the war and the end of 1942, air raids killed 2,092 and wounded 3,455 civilians in Egypt and were responsible for most of the Egyptian military's 1,300 casualties.<sup>82</sup> Beyond physical destruction, air raids posed a dire threat to public order. After serious raids, hundreds of thousands of civilians many of whom abandoned their work at utilities and vital war industries, fled from the cities to the countryside,. In coordination with the Egyptian and British military, the Egyptian government built up a civil defense administration that could maintain a blackout, air raid sirens and a network of public and private shelters, as well as provide accommodation and welfare services for refugees to the countryside. Even after the Axis defeat at the battle of El Alamein, the Luftwaffe retained the ability to stage raids over Egypt from

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<sup>80</sup> NARA, RG 84, 820.03 Vice Consul LeBreton to State, January 9, 1943.

<sup>81</sup> For an excellent treatment of the 1944 Malaria epidemic, see Gallagher, *Egypt's Other Wars*.

<sup>82</sup> President of the Council of Ministers, *Khidmāt Miṣr Lil-Ḥulafa'*, 11. The Ministry of Interior made daily reports of casualties see for example DWQ 0069-004803, casualty report of 31 August 1941. The American consul in Alexandria also made regular reports on the raids, see NARA RG 84, 711, from 1940 to 1942.

Crete until 1945, nearly exclusively for the purposes of surveillance, but this forced the Egyptian government to maintain its civil defense regime until nearly the end of the war in Europe.

Like everywhere else in Europe, the Egyptian government had been studying the techniques for civil defense from air raids in 1938 and 1939. Yet Egypt remained woefully unprepared when Italian attacks began in earnest because of uncertainty about how much money to commit to the effort, and where to commit it. The Ministry of Finance commissioned a study from British military engineers in early 1939 about the preparedness of the ministry building for an attack. The engineers deemed the Belle Epoque style of government buildings in Downtown Cairo sturdy, but by no means protection enough, especially to protect the Finance Ministry's crucial paperwork and cash reserves kept on the premises. They recommended building shelters in its wide courtyards, as the Ministry of Interior had already done.<sup>83</sup> After the start of the war, the prime minister delegated the creation of blackout regulations and preliminary civil defense measures in 1939 to the military governors of the respective zones, but on December 12, 1939, the government had coordinated the first nationwide urban blackout with satisfactory performance from the police and populace at large.<sup>84</sup> The military governors negotiated with the British to allow the British to take possession of spaces at particular risk of air raids in urban areas through their state of siege powers of eminent

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<sup>83</sup> DWQ 0081-094025, Report of the Technical Advisor to the British Military Mission to the Ministry of Finance, 29 May 1939. The Alexandria Municipality passed regulations requiring shelters in all new buildings at around this time. NARA, RG 84, 810.1, Fish to State, 15 May 1939.

<sup>84</sup> NARA RG 59, 883.20, Fish to State, 22 Dec. 1939. Alexandria began nightly blackouts starting the next month to prevent German submarines from mining the harbor: NARA RG 59, 883.20, Fletcher to State, 3 Jan. 1940.

domain, such as a shantytown that had grown up around the oil storage tanks in Alexandria's western harbor.<sup>85</sup>

Air raids on Alexandria began shortly after the Italian declaration of war, with the first on the night of June 21, 1940. They accelerated in frequency and severity through November of that year, after which the British advance into Libya temporarily pushed Italian planes out of range. Despite the repeated drills and propaganda, the population of Alexandria found that civil defense resources were still desperately meager for the average resident. By October 1940, the authorities had built shelters that could only accommodate 23,000 people in a city of 700,000. They had spent merely LE 130,000 on this work and in laying in first aid supplies.<sup>86</sup> The areas south and east of Alexandria's western harbor, high-density lower-class neighborhoods like Kermouz and al-Wardiyan, were particularly vulnerable to bombs that overshot their intended military and naval targets. As a result, 200,000 civilians fled the city in several waves following particularly heavy attacks. The government found another vital service overwhelmed: railway transportation. One solution was to offer free passes at lower priority times to the poor, for which 100,000 accepted. Many others left to Kafr al-Dawwar, some 20 kilometers, on foot or by cart.<sup>87</sup> There were only about 20 raids on Cairo in 1940, of which only three dropped bombs, once in the wealthy suburb of al-Maadi.<sup>88</sup>

Egypt's cities experienced a six-month respite in attacks after the successful British counterattack in December 1940 pushed the Italian forces out of Cyrenaica, and most civilians returned to full time residence in Alexandria. However, the German entry

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<sup>85</sup> DWQ 0081-030620, British Naval liaison to the Governorate of Alexandria, 1 Jan. 1940.

<sup>86</sup> "ARP: What Alexandria is Doing," Egyptian Gazette, 17 October 1940

<sup>87</sup> NARA RG 84, 711, American Consul in Alexandria C. Paul Fletcher to State, 27 July 1940.

<sup>88</sup> NARA RG 84 711, Report by Major Burt Smith, 19 Dec. 1940.

to the North African front, combined with a successful German attack on Greece in April 1941 that drew away a good deal of British army and air power, opened Alexandria and the Suez Canal to devastating attack. During the nights of June 4 through June 8, heavy firebombing killed 700 and wounded a similar number of civilians in Alexandria neighborhoods near the harbor, several times the total number of casualties to date, and causing an even bigger exodus than the prior summer's attacks. The Luftwaffe kept up regular and heavy bombardment in 274 air sorties against Alexandria between June and October 1941. Administrators noted that casualty figures decreased over time simply because civilians had fled the most threatened areas.<sup>89</sup>

It was only after these severe attacks that the Egyptian government seriously approached the logistical tasks that restricted resources had prevented it from confronting earlier. The American consul had complained earlier that the state's response to refugee and victim relief had been limited to soliciting donations from private organizations like the American Red Cross and to tapping into sequestered Italian funds.<sup>90</sup> As with the other financial negotiations over defense arrangements, there was a naturally accelerating commitment after the most fatal attacks: a new public works levy for LE 40,000 for reconstruction on June 5 evolved into an LE 450,000 commitment for the current and coming budgetary year for new hospital capacity, refugee accommodation and in building new shelters.<sup>91</sup> The British pledged LE 1 million for repairs and building shelters, conditional on accepting supervision over its expenditure by technical advisor Colonel Burt-Smith and more general supervision of civil defense wardens by the police (which still had a contingent of Europeans including two British commanders, Russell and

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<sup>89</sup> Playfair, *The Mediterranean and Middle East*, v. 3, 300.

<sup>90</sup> NARA RG 84, 711, Fletcher to State, 26 Nov. 1940.

<sup>91</sup> DWQ 0081-030820, Finance ministry to Sirry, 5 June and 11 June 1941.

Fitzpatrick).<sup>92</sup> Egyptian volunteer air raid wardens helped lead their neighbors to public shelters, to maintain traffic in blackout conditions, and to perform rudimentary firefighting.<sup>93</sup> The minister of public works argued for increasing the annual salary base of the civil defense administration that ran this network and coordinated emergency medical and fire services from a mere LE 1,500 to LE 23,000 by hiring 200 new employees.<sup>94</sup> This administration eventually evolved into a full ministry in August, assuming responsibilities and employees from Interior, Public Health and public works and reaching an annual budget of LE 56,000 by 1943.<sup>95</sup>

The Luftwaffe staged air raids on the Suez Canal in late 1941 from Crete, with a total of 34 night attacks from July to October, totaling 390 sorties. These were also of greater intensity and range than 1940, and destroyed a large section of the seaport and customs warehouses in Port Said on September 1, and killed 66 Egyptian soldiers in Suez on September 4.<sup>96</sup> Cairo also received the heaviest bombing of the war in September and October 1941, killing dozens on several occasions. *Muqattam* and the *Egyptian Mail* pointed out that this contravened the German propaganda promise not to bomb Cairo during the holy month of Ramadan.<sup>97</sup> The arrival of the Axis army to within 100 kilometers of Alexandria in July 1942 threw the Egyptian civil defense effort into high gear, even if this effort ended up being unnecessary. These preparations again illustrate the artificial and fragile boundaries between British military and Egyptian civilian space.

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<sup>92</sup> FO 93/32/67 Lampson to Sirry 11 June 1941. Lampson did not fail to use this LE 1 million repeatedly to pressure Sirry to improve pro-British and pro-War propaganda: DWQ 0076-000302, Lampson to Sirry 16 Sep. 1941.

<sup>93</sup> The Cairo Police helped organize these civil defense committees, appointing men mainly of effendi status to their leadership. DWQ 0073-05156, Cairo police secret political report 1490, 31 May 1940.

<sup>94</sup> DWQ 0081-030820 Ministry of Public Health to Sirry, 12 June 1941.

<sup>95</sup> DWQ 0081-019345 Memorandum of the Council of Ministers, 26 Aug. 1941.

<sup>96</sup> NARA RG 84 711, Port Said Consul B. Reath Riggs to State, 7 Sep. 1941.

<sup>97</sup> NARA RG 84 711, Kirk to State, 7 Oct. 1941. Ramadan 1360 A.H. took place 23 Sep. to 21 Oct. 1941.

Shortly after the Axis advance was stopped at El Alamein in July 1942, the Egyptians and British developed cooperative plans for a full evacuation from Alexandria. BTE commander Lt. General Robert Stone recommended a policy of “thinning out” the civilian population to avoid gridlock on the roads approaching Alexandria in case the Axis armies were able to break the defenses at El Alamein.<sup>98</sup> Al-Nahhas retorted to Stone that it could only participate in such a scheme with funding from the British. Subsidizing transportation and accommodation for the prior evacuations had stretched the Egyptian budget for such measures to its utmost limit. In the meantime, another Anglo-Egyptian committee drew up detailed maps with transit and final evacuation zones in Eastern Gharbiya and Sharqiya for civilians routed through Abu Qir in such a way not to disrupt reinforcement from Tanta or the Desert road.<sup>99</sup> However, the number and severity of air raids near or on civilian areas declined over the course of 1942 because of a limited stock of fuel for Axis air forces, which was tied up in the Russian campaign and then prioritized for the attack on Tobruk and for advancing tank squadrons to El Alamein. Moreover, the allies had shifted much more of their supply overland from Suez rather than through Alexandria harbor in reply to the attacks of 1941.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, there were far fewer volunteers to participate in such a thinning out scheme in the first place; thanks to the Allied success at El Alamein, the Egyptian resources in this area were ultimately not further taxed.

The threat of air raids resonated widely through the Egyptian popular and artistic imagination. Weekly illustrated magazines published double-truck pictorial reports of the

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<sup>98</sup> DWQ 0069-007344, Stone to Mustafa Nusrat, Minister of Civil Defense. 17 July 1942.

<sup>99</sup> FO 141-854, “Memorandum for the discussion of the Anglo-Egyptian committee for the evacuation of Alexandria” 15 Aug. 1942.

<sup>100</sup> DWQ 0076-000161, United Kingdom Royal Air Force, *The Rise and Fall of the German Air Force, 1933-1945* (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1947), 137-144.



Figure 3.4. (L) Damage from the June 7, 1941 air raids in Alexandria. NARA RG 59, 883.00/1202, Gaudin to State, June 13, 1941. (R) A public air raid drill at Midan al-Khalifa in Cairo, July 30, 1942. Close mixing in dark shelters with strangers of both genders violated social norms and provoked fear of crime. IWM Photo Archive, E 15056.

destruction after large attacks on Alexandria, as well as human interest stories of refugees to the countryside and conditions in public air raid shelters.<sup>101</sup> These magazines also employed cartoons to educate the public about safe conduct during a raid and also using air raids as material for political satire. There was scarcely a week in 1941 or 1942 when the prime minister was not depicted hiding from a warplane or bomb. Egypt's literary authors and dramatists picked up on this episode in Egyptian life, but frequently went much further in exposing the social anxiety and fear of modernity beyond mere physical harm that raids represented. Perhaps the best known depictions of wartime Egypt are in Naguib Mahfouz' *al-Sukkariya (Sugar Street)*, the final volume of his Cairo Trilogy published in 1957, in which the elderly patriarch al-Sayyid Ahmad 'Abd al-Gawad dies from a heart attack after the excitement of fleeing his home during an air raid, symbolic of the irrevocable change Egypt had undergone in the foregoing 30 years.<sup>102</sup> Mahfouz addressed the terror of air raids for the residents of al-'Abbasiyya, the neighborhood

<sup>101</sup> For example, coverage air raids in *Al-Musawwar* 12 July 1940, *Al-Ithnein wal-Dunya*, 14 July 1941; and of public shelters, 28 July 1941. Flight to the countryside in *Al-Musawwar*, 5 July 1940 and 3 July 1942.

<sup>102</sup> Najīb Maḥfūz, *The Cairo Trilogy*, Trans. William Maynard Hutchinsons (New York: Everyman's Library, 2001), 1208.



adjoining the largest military base in Cairo, in *Khan al-Khalili*, published in 1945, the first of his novels set in the present day after writing a trilogy set in ancient Egypt. A terrible raid triggers the plot, as the family moves to an older neighborhood surrounding a famous mosque to avoid the danger of further raids. Ahmad, the protagonist, remembers, “...one bomb had landed so close that everyone imagined that it had actually exploded inside their very hearts and minds. They all raised their hands as though to protect themselves in case the ceiling fell in on them. There was more screaming and praying; the word ‘God’ was on everyone’s lips... how can anyone possibly forget that awful screeching sound—the screech of death itself—as it made its inexorable way in their direction; how the entire building had shaken and the windows had rattled before it actually landed.”<sup>103</sup>

Mahmoud Taymour brought dread of air raids and life of the shelters to the center of his fictional narratives with a finely-tuned dose of social commentary in two plays he wrote during the war itself, *Makhba’a Raqm 13* (*Shelter 13*, in 1941) and *Qanabil* (*Bombs*, in 1943). In *Shelter 13*, a dozen characters from the full social spectrum of Cairo’s urban society become trapped in a shelter after a bomb hits the building above its entrance. Taymour takes advantage of the limits of the stage to emphasize the claustrophobia and panic of prolonged enclosure in a small space. His dialogue investigates the way social and state authority constructs this space. At first, it is clear that Cairo has not yet received a serious attack, and the upper-class characters are mostly dismissive of the threat and indignant about being forced into the shelter by police on the street. A shoeshiner, old beggar and cake-seller continue to ply their trades in the shelter.

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<sup>103</sup> Najīb Maḥfūz, *Khan Al-Khalili*, Trans. Roger Allen (Cairo: American University in Cairo Press, 2008), 30.

The aristocratic Nabil Bey goes so far to suggest that shelters should be constructed with multiple “classes,” like railway cars, to avoid this nuisance.<sup>104</sup> A cabaret singing girl provides the requisite musical number and entertains the bored Cairenes, but offends the sensibility of the young daughter of a Pasha, a subtle hint at the sexually threatening aspect of close gender mixing across classes in shelters and the scandals mentioned above. After the intense raid blocks their exit for 14 hours, the social value of the lower class characters, especially al-Fuli the cakeseller, rises accordingly. Nabil Bey, who resented the interference of the government before, is now indignant that al-Fuli is breaking government price rules by demanding 100 piasters for one of his cakes — but he pays it.<sup>105</sup>

*Qanabil* poses an even deeper examination of the anomic violence of bombs and the techno-medicalization of modern life.<sup>106</sup> Retired Sheikh ‘Abul Yusuf and Dirgham are Cairene neighbors and distant relatives; ‘Abul Yusuf is relatively better off, but his daughter Luliyya is engaged to Dirgham’s son Mahrous. After the death of all of his other children, Dirgham is anxious of losing Mahrous, who has volunteered as a soldier to work in civil defense. Dirgham persuades them all, including Mahrous and ‘Abu al-Yusuf’s footloose son Nasih, to depart Cairo for ‘Abu al-Yusuf’s rural manor after a severe air raid occurs at the end of act one. It becomes evident the strains of war are preventing the characters from getting their priorities straight. Engrossed in civil defense preparations, ‘Abul Yusuf is neglecting the proper irrigation of his rice crop, despite the complaint of his bailiff Hawwash. Once in the countryside, ‘Abul Yusuf and Luliyya

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<sup>104</sup> Maḥmūd Taymūr, *Al-Makhba’ Raqm 13* (Cairo: Maṭba‘at al-Hilal, 1949), 112.

<sup>105</sup> Taymūr, *Al-Makhba’ Raqm 13*, 151.

<sup>106</sup> Muhammad Badawi calls *Qanabil* “perhaps Taymur’s greatest comedy.” Muḥammad Muṣṭafā Badawī, *Modern Arabic Drama in Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 98.

become more interested in social improvement projects like distributing insecticide to the peasants to prevent the spread of malaria and continue to neglect the harvest. Seeking to prevent Mahrous' return to the city, Dirgham hides his rifle from him, only for it to reappear Checkhov-style in a gun battle with the family of a peasant woman Nasih has seduced in his ample spare time in refuge from the city (Dirgham believes it is an air raid, even far outside the city). In the final act, the two families learn that the government is about to impose a quarantine on the village, which will trap them with the risk of catching malaria. They attempt to stay up until late in the evening and then drive back to Cairo under cover of night, but doze off during a servant's (allegorical) story about a medieval sultan who sought in vain to avoid death. The play ends with 'Abu al-Yusuf and Dirgham awakening in panic, presumably trapped in the quarantine. While containing more conventional critiques of government administration or of the laziness and self-deception of the upper classes, these plays manage also to represent the fears and anxieties of these groups in a cutting fashion that most media avoided. *Al-Hilal* magazine cited both plays in a 1945 review of recent theater that best managed to capture the "feel of the war," and judged it superior to the majority of "escapist, music-hall fare."<sup>107</sup>

Public shelter building campaigns led to larger-scale state interventions in surveillance and housing, to try to reimpose order on hundreds of thousands of refugees. After the severe June 1941 air raids, the civil defense and interior bureaucracies struggled to keep track of the largest emergency internal migration to date in 20<sup>th</sup> century Egypt. 300,000 people, almost half the population of Alexandria, fled the city, many with no homes to return to. Officials arranged special 1,600-person trains from Alexandria to Cairo in the first two weeks of June, and monitored travelers on other trains, producing

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<sup>107</sup> Zaki Tulaimat, "Egyptian Theater in this War," *Al-Hilal*, Jan. 1945.

daily lists of 73,000 arrivals to Cairo and through traffic of 52,000 refugees traveling to Upper Egypt in the first week after the attack. Regional police departments reported the arrival of 30,000 in 20 Delta smaller towns, many of which only received a few hundred people each, but who were enough to significantly stress their resources.<sup>108</sup> Cairo public and charitable private refugee shelters could take only very small numbers in groups of no more than one to three hundred, totaling around 4000. Official correspondence indicates the belief that the majority of refugees going to small towns or rural areas were going to stay with relatives; census data from 1937 indicates nearly one quarter of Egyptian Alexandrians were born outside the city, including 60,000 from Upper Egypt, and many more still had roots in the countryside.

The assumption families could absorb the excess population proved faulty almost immediately, judging by the avalanche of complaints and petitions the King's diwan and bureaucracy received. Many were from individuals who wanted special treatment or compensation for the loss of a husband or son, or house, but many others ask for permission to move to another area because of overcrowding and food supply shortages or to complain the police in the village where they took refuge expelled them against their will.<sup>109</sup> The government received notification from wealthy owners of villages in the Delta that were overrun with both relatives of farm laborers and strangers and had no medical facilities or sufficient services for these numbers of people. The congestion problem was particularly bad in the villages in lower Beheira, like Kafr al-Zayat and Kafr al-Dawwar, that were commuting distance from Alexandria. Many workers of crucial

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<sup>108</sup> DWQ 0081-030820 Ministry of Public Health to Sirry, 12 June 1941.

<sup>109</sup> DWQ 0071-03440 Petitions to the King's Diwan forwarded to the Civil Defense administration. Examples: 'Abdel Megīd Al-Nishār, refugee in Aswan complained of poor conditions and petitioned for aid to return to Cairo to search for work on 14 Sep. 1941. Sha'bān 'Abdo and other refugees in Disūq complained of police harrassment, forcing them to leave the village on 11 Nov. 1941.

industries tried to ensure the safety of their families by moving them to these towns and taking government-organized shared cars to their factories every day at subsidized rates.

The ministry of public health eventually developed a questionnaire that it required refugees to complete to be eligible to receive food or other assistance that allowed it to collect information about where or with whom these families were living, and what the productive labor capacity of its adult members was. The eventual solution to the housing crisis was to launch the first regime of public housing for the modern Egyptian state. Recognizing the hardship the refugees would face living in tents in winter, the council of ministers approved LE 200,000 program to build 3,140 brick and wood tenements that would accommodate on average 20 people each, in the major towns in Gharbiya and Buhayra.<sup>110</sup> The Egyptian government did not consider this building campaign to be a permanent program, however, and it tried to share expenses for construction of public housing with industries that would repurchase the structures after the war to be workers' housing, as they did with Misr Spinning and Weaving in Mahalla al-Kubra.<sup>111</sup>

By the end of the war, the unprecedented size of shantytowns at the heart of Cairo forced the state to intervene, for the first time, with fully funded public housing. Major unplanned settlements had grown up on land around the central railroad station and railroad lines in Bulaq and Shubra, and older buildings adjoining areas had become high-density tenements. The residents of these communities, in this case, were more likely refugees from rural poverty and labor migrants (who are examined in chapters four and five). In early 1947, the council of ministers planned to demolish these slums "in the interest of public health in Bulaq, Sayyida Zeinab, Shubra and Khalifa," and to build

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<sup>110</sup> DWQ 0075-055058 Report of the Minister of Public Works, 13 July 1941.

<sup>111</sup> See Chapter 4 for more details. DWQ 0081-030823, Minister of Civil Defense to Council of Ministers, 10 Nov. 1942.

6,100 units of public housing for 20,000 people on 200 feddans of land in Imbaba and 100 feddans in Ezba al Kharbouti north of the urbanized area of Shubra.<sup>112</sup> Such a plan was certainly in the interest of public security as well, to remove potentially politically troublesome elements from the railroad and its workshops, sites of increased trade union activity.

The plans (optimistically) included elementary and secondary schools for boys and girls, a vocational school, a hospital, two mosques, police station, a “social center” with a theater and cinema, and a tram line, all at a budget of LE 1.125 million, with the goal of charging residents no more than 15% of their wage in rent. Hints of the profit and political patronage to be earned through such a removal and demolition project peek through the thick concern of social reform. Administrators proclaimed that once the shacks are gone, the area could be properly urban planned and sold off to “become one of the best areas of the city.” By mid-1949, the committee’s staff reported that 100 feddans had been reclaimed from slums in Bulaq, a new street grid was being laid out and land sold to investors.<sup>113</sup> Meanwhile, only 550 out of the planned 6,100 units had been built in Imbaba.<sup>114</sup> Where the thousands of residents who had been pushed out of Bulaq but who did not receive units ended up, the record does not say. It does not appear the urban plan achieved its aim in the long run — its proximity to many small industrial factories encouraged working class migration. Ironically, President Sadat acted again to remove

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<sup>112</sup> DWQ 0081-026002, Higher Commission for Public Housing report, 30 April 1947.

<sup>113</sup> DWQ 0081-026002, Higher Commission for Public Housing report, 27 April 1949.

<sup>114</sup> DWQ 0081-026002, Higher Commission for Public Housing report, 22 August 1949.

the poor residents of Bulaq in 1979-1981 and attempted to redevelop the area, particularly land facing the corniche, with luxury apartments and five-star hotels.<sup>115</sup>

Besides the fear of violence and death that the air raids directly presented, Taymour's plays reveal how the state-driven solutions to this threat themselves distorted social space. In both the air raid shelter and quarantines, Egyptians found that the government was willing in the name of security to compel the mixing of social classes and in particular, genders, in a way it never had before. The provision of emergency housing also raised social challenges related to the balance between granting services to needy subjects and maintaining appropriate familial and community linkages. Just as the government wished to return the housing stock to private ownership, they sought to accelerate the return of dependents and women to private care. For example, an article in *al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya* featured a group of dozens of young unmarried women from Alexandria whose families had been made destitute or killed in the air raids and flight to the countryside who sought a solution to their plight by seeking marriage, arranged through the Ministry of Social Affairs (which would ensure they received the appropriate bride price).<sup>116</sup> This offer directly precipitated the satire in the cartoon from chapter one (Figure 1.3), published a few months later. The government now not only undertook to shelter Egyptians from violent bombing and then house them when rendered homeless after such attacks, but it sought to play matchmaker for homeless women and reverse-engineer the Egyptian family in the name of social security. Where did this leave the paternal underpinning of the traditional Egyptian family?

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<sup>115</sup> Farha Ghannam, *Remaking the Modern: Space, Relocation, and the Politics of Identity in a Global Cairo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>116</sup> "Girl Refugees for Marriage," *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, 21 July 1941.

## CONCLUSION

In contrast to Foucault's concept that contemporary states have moved toward security with diffused and privatized practices of power, Egypt in the war and late colonial era generally required visible and costly operations of force to produce increasingly complex divisions of space. These operations were the necessary result of the abstract legal jurisdictions that the state of siege enabled and the conditions of war activated. Close state surveillance of the limited but rich Egyptian agricultural land had long been a fact of governance. However, the events of war — including mass migrations of 600,000 rural Egyptians to the cities to find work, repeated emergency evacuations of as many as 400,000 Alexandrians to the interior to escape heavy air raids, along with the garrisoning of 350,000 and the transit of more than a million Allied troops — demanded a shift from a static to a fluid definition of space in security policy. Maintaining public order between soldiers with legal immunities and the Egyptian people required an illiberal fictive division of public space, creating shifting zones which Egyptians were not allowed to traverse or to view. Although immunities for foreigners and the Mixed Courts ended shortly after the war, the Egyptian state's finely tuned distinctions between civilian space and military or security space endured. This presentation poses important questions about the way this spacial logic continued after the British turned over the wartime military bases that occupied the desert space framing the major cities of the delta directly to the Egyptian military. The Egyptian military's ownership of desert land is one of its principal sources of independent wealth and power until the present.





Figure 3.5. The British military infrastructure of Lower Egypt as of 1943. WO 201/2281 "Some Notes of Strategic Roads in Egypt" 17 Jan. 1945; WO 201/2271 British Troops in Egypt (BTE) Order of Battle, July 1941.

## **Chapter IV**

### **Empire of the Granary**

#### **The Political Economy of State-Controlled Agriculture, Trade and Consumption**

Winston Churchill was a frequent visitor to Cairo after the major British offensive effort shifted to the Middle East in 1941. Ambassador Sir Miles Lampson hosted Churchill at his residence and recorded the events of these visits in his diary. He implies this close contact, along with British military success at El Alamein, led to his elevation to the peerage as Lord Killearn on January 1, 1943. Churchill became friendly in his meetings with King Faruq despite Faruq's frequent hostility to the British leadership and its coercive treatment of him. Although Churchill at first found him flippant and cynical, he mused, "he wasn't entirely sure that something might not yet be made of the boy."<sup>1</sup> Their shared aristocratic outlook on life in general and Egyptian commoners in particular, love of cigars and guns, and their orientation towards the big picture of the war's outcome helped foster this relationship.

Churchill's interactions with Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa al-Nahhas were never as easygoing. During a meeting on January 28, 1943, Killearn noted,

[Churchill]... mentioned the question of supplies, emphasizing the vital necessity of getting what we wanted from Egypt [i.e., surplus rice]. This drew from Nahas (sic) a long explanation of local difficulties and more particularly, how could we expect to get what we wanted from Egypt in the way of cereals, etc. If we did not supply her with adequate nitrates. All of this of course was well over the head of

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<sup>1</sup> Killearn and Evans, *The Killearn Diaries*, 230-231.

the P.M., who naturally is not concerned with such details... I was afraid at one moment, when Nahas was well in his stride, that Winston was going to sleep. He sat with his eyes shut and looked like it, but in actual fact he was only getting bored.<sup>2</sup>

It is a tribute to Churchill's confidence in Killearn that he could find matters of food logistics, military or civilian, so boring. Although not as dramatic as fighting and the adoption of new military technology, historians have argued the careful management of food in the Second World War was just as crucial to the eventual success of the Allies in the long war of economic attrition. Strict British agricultural planning and the American cornucopia helped keep industrial output high on the home front and morale up among soldiers fighting overseas.<sup>3</sup> The Japanese military, scattered across the archipelago of South East Asia, by contrast suffered bitterly from lack of food.<sup>4</sup> German efforts to maintain high rations for German citizens while ruthlessly exploiting the industrial labour of underfed Poles and Ukrainians from conquered territory backfired, as the lack of farm labor and general chaos in these areas prevented them becoming the breadbaskets that German economic managers had hoped.<sup>5</sup>

Allied states prioritized food supply for their militaries and metropolises, although the resulting suffering and death in their colonies did not compare to the genocidal intent of Nazi food policies. The balancing act often required pragmatic stances. By late 1942, the looming threat of food shortages leading to mass rural and urban uprisings were haunting British administrators from Alexandria to Rangoon. The worldwide shortage of

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<sup>2</sup> Killearn and Evans, *The Killearn Diaries*, 247-248.

<sup>3</sup> Alan S. Milward, *War, Economy and Society, 1939-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 245-293; Ina. Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> E. M. Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War Two and the Battle for Food* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 273-315.

<sup>5</sup> J. Adam. Tooze, *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy* (London ; New York: Allen Lane, 2006), 513-551.

fertilizer, rice and wheat in 1942, which caused a severe famine in Bengal that was unfolding as Churchill yawned, has drawn critical historical attention to the role this event played in the Indian nationalist movement.<sup>6</sup> The relative success of the American-Anglo-Egyptian management of supply for Egypt and the Middle East, through the Middle East Supply Center (MESC), has made it the subject of several hagiographic late-imperial institutional memoirs but not much critical historical analysis.<sup>7</sup> This institutional writing from the 1950s and early 1960s sought to explain the failure of the last phase of British neocolonial influence after the war, in its modernization and development programs largely patterned on the MESC.<sup>8</sup> The chief British economist for the MESC during the war, E.M.H. Lloyd, has written about the logistical, ecological and monetary/fiscal natures of the MESC's tasks without particularly touching on the political nature or effects of coerced neocolonial economic policy formation.

Robert Vitalis and Steven Heydemann provide one of the only academic treatments of the MESC that judges its effects on postwar policy in Egypt and Syria. They identify the impact of both world wars as a major historiographical gap in the understanding of mid-century and postcolonial political economies across Africa and Asia. They portray the total control over all imports the Allies exercised during the war on shipping as a direct cause of the fundamental shift away from the colonial export-oriented free market, arguing, "...wartime regulatory changes did not just promote the transition from market liberalism to statism. They shifted Middle East political

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<sup>6</sup> Paul R Greenough, *Prosperity and Misery in Modern Bengal: The Bengal Famine of 1943-44* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Madhusree Mukerjee, *Churchill's Secret War: The British Empire and the Ravaging of India During World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Lloyd, *Food and Inflation*; Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*; Wilmington, *The Middle East Supply Centre*.

<sup>8</sup> P. W. Kingston, *Britain and the Politics of Modernization in the Middle East, 1945-1958* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11-27.

economies onto a distinctive path, constructing a singular, if flexible template for how statism would become organized... If state elites in Egypt and Syria were not themselves steeped in the techniques of demand management, they were nonetheless heavily influenced by the Keynesian-esque regulatory environment that Allied bureaucrats created, one in which state intervention easily acquired legitimacy as a solution to problems of economic development.”<sup>9</sup>

Their chapter identifies many of the problems the MESC faced when fitting policy goals to the topography of local politics, particularly when it came to corruption in distribution of supplies and opposition to the expansion of state fiscal structures through the expansion of taxation. However, lacking in-depth archival research into the Egyptian and Syrian government bureaucracies, they can not explain why the MESC faced this trouble, or how specifically these struggles shaped future policy. I also suggest that their focus on Allied administrators as the most important filter through which Egyptian politicians and society understood and managed the war economy slights the full political and cultural context in which these negotiations occurred.

The first important context is the framing concept of this dissertation, that the emerging concept of state security, and not merely economic development, was the principal lens through which the Egyptian authorities understood wartime management policies. Although the war crisis produced state planning policies similar to the Keynesian policies that had been implemented throughout western economies in the 1930s, the basic economic problem in Egypt was different from those classic Keynesianism addressed. Rather than requiring increased government spending to stimulate demand on a depressed economy, in Egypt the economy groaned under an

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<sup>9</sup> Vitalis and Heydemann, “War, Keynesianism, and Colonialism”, 105-106.

influx of fiat money backed by British credit that flooded to Egyptian contractors and laborers, coupled with wide reaching shortages of food and other essentials. The model for the Egyptian state that Allied administrators and Egyptian politicians adopted through trial and error was not that of a caretaker that slowly guided society towards greater income equality so as to improve the demand basis of the economy. Rather, it imposed sudden unplanned subsidies to make sure the majority could purchase the minimum amounts of necessities to prevent mass riots breaking out in the street.

The other important context for wartime state economic management was preexisting political discourses about the role the Egyptian state should take to provide welfare services to its subjects. Despite a general intellectual malaise among the liberal elite with regard to increased government social services, a small wing of effendi intellectuals and technocrat academics was taking great strides in connecting public education, public health and more daring ideas of redistribution to improve living conditions for the peasantry to a modernist definition of Egyptian nationalism.

A mixture of hesitation and haste in Egyptian war policymaking, along with a chronic shortage of resources and managerial skill, meant that many of these policies failed, or were always in the process of almost-failing. However, their breakdown provides an opening in the archival record to examine the state at work. The neocolonial context of the war — marked by short-sighted demands and inter-agency competition among the British — certainly aggravated Egyptian administrators' problems. Moreover, the monopoly conditions, combined with the deep political insecurity of the Wafd Party, made corruption in supply and import licensing widespread. These problems did nothing to discredit the overall idea that state management was necessary for social security. This

idea in fact became entrenched during the postwar and 1948 Palestine war-era austerity. Despite the inextricable interconnection of economic factors, this chapter will focus on the way the war affected agricultural production and the consumption of food and imported goods resulting from the world shipping crisis, or the “supply” side of the economy. The following chapter treats changes in the labor market, prices and fiscal policy on the “demand” side of the economy.

### MANAGING A CLOSED DOOR POLICY

The war’s first blow to the Egyptian economy was the loss of the German and Polish market for the 1940 raw cotton crop, followed by most of the remaining continental European countries for the 1941 crop and Japan in 1942. These states had consumed 45% of Egypt’s cotton in 1939.<sup>10</sup> The ownership and use of much Egyptian agricultural land had been transformed over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century from peasant subsistence farming into private cotton plantations for export to Europe.<sup>11</sup> The Egyptian soil and climate was particularly suitable to the production of long and extra-long staple cotton, and by 1900 Egypt produced 70% of the world’s supply of this luxury good, although the United States and India produced much larger volumes of cotton overall. Long staple cotton was not only bound to European capital and factories in Lancashire, the Ruhr Valley and Milan for manufacture, it was also less marketable in Egypt because the

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<sup>10</sup> Germany and other European states consumed 17% and 20% of the consumption of the 8.5 million qintar 1939 crop respectively. Japan consumed a further 8% of the crop; one qintar = 45 kg of lint cotton.

<sup>11</sup> Roger Owen, *Cotton and the Egyptian Economy, 1820-1914: A Study in Trade and Development* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); Eric Davis, *Challenging Colonialism: Bank Miṣr and Egyptian Industrialization, 1920-1941* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1983).

average Egyptian could not afford expensive fine cotton fabric.<sup>12</sup> There had therefore been little investment in spinning and weaving machinery in Egypt that could produce textiles to European market quality, and making inexpensive cloth with expensive raw cotton was not cost effective.

While I focused in chapter two on the constitutional and political debates around the founding the state of siege, parliament actually spent more time during the extraordinary session in October 1939 debating how emergency powers should be used to subsidize threatened cotton growers. Ultimately, the British government agreed to form a commission with the Egyptian government to purchase any cotton offered to it that could not find a foreign buyer, for which both parties would share the cost. The commission purchased 6.7 million of 9 million qintars produced in 1940. The UK Ministry of Supply assumed control of importing cotton from private British agents (who had previously acquired 2.7 million qintars or 32% of the 1939 crop).<sup>13</sup>

The nature of the economic problem changed in June 1940 when Italy joined the war, its submarine fleet closed the Mediterranean to shipping, and the world committed more shipping tonnage overall to war purposes. Despite the growing Allied demand for cotton, the British simply could not transport it all to the requisite factories, and they began to push the Egyptians to pass legislation restricting the 1941 cotton crop in favor of food crops. Ironically, when Prime Minister Hassan Sabry, shortly after succeeding 'Ali Mahir in June 1940, created a Ministry of Supply to manage kerosene ration cards and

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<sup>12</sup> Ellis Goldberg, *Trade, Reputation, and Child Labor in Twentieth-Century Egypt* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004) discusses the development of the market reputation of long-staple Egyptian cotton in this period.

<sup>13</sup> FO 371/31556, J1850, Scrivener Memo on Egyptian Cotton, 18 April 1942. The commission purchased the lint cotton at an average price of LE 70 a ton, which was an improvement over the previous year's average of LE 57 per ton, however, cotton growers unhappily suspected that the British would reap even higher prices on its reserves when wartime scarcity became apparent.



any other shortages that arose, its first agricultural task was to act as a buyer of last resort for *surplus* wheat, rice and onions from the strong 1939-1940 winter growing season.<sup>14</sup> The British military accepted 20,000 tons of Egyptian wheat in the first half of 1941.<sup>15</sup> These surplus conditions were short lived, however, and yields started falling precipitously with the winter crop of 1941 because of bad weather and soil exhaustion from lack of fertilizer.

In addition to technological and diplomatic conditions of worldwide war that made the near total isolation of the Egyptian economy possible, a recent revolution in artificial fertilizers also compounded the Egyptian economy's vulnerability. In the course of just 20 years, Egyptian land had become some of the most heavily fertilized in the world. As new irrigation works built during the British occupation era expanded the areas of the country with adequate water to plant crops in three distinct seasons during the year, vital nutrients in Egypt's soil began to be depleted. Of the three most important minerals most plants need, Egypt's soil had adequate potassium naturally, and rock phosphorus was present in mineral deposits in the desert east of the Nile, but the intensive crop rotations used up nitrogen in the soil faster than it could be replenished, even with occasional fallow cycles. Chilean nitrate, better known as saltpeter, used in the production of both nitrogenous fertilizer and explosives, had been the world's only substantial source of solid chemical nitrogen prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Egyptian consumption of Chilean nitrate-based fertilizers had been 70,000 tons in 1914. Consumption increased exponentially after the end of the First World War because the introduction of artificial fertilizers caused the average price to fertilize a typical feddan to

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<sup>14</sup> DWQ 0081-019346, Royal Decree founding the Ministry of Supply, 27 June 1940.

<sup>15</sup> Lloyd, *Food and Inflation*, 119.

fall from LE 25 to LE 5.<sup>16</sup> Consumption tripled in particular in the last half of the 1930s because of increases in credit available to poorer peasants and a new government policy of import tariffs to encourage the growth of wheat, which responds much better to fertilizer than cotton.<sup>17</sup> Egyptian farmers consumed 500,000 tons of fertilizer per year by 1939. By comparison, the entire United States consumed an average of 334,000 tons and Great Britain consumed merely 50,000 tons per year of nitrogenous fertilizers in the years before the war.<sup>18</sup>

The Egyptian Ministry of Trade and Industry had realized as early as October 1939 that stocks of nitrogenous fertilizers would be threatened by world wartime demand, and encouraged traders to increase their amount of imports with guarantees the ministry would purchase any surplus in the following season. Surely enough, the Ministry of Finance reported in December 1940 the difficulty of Egyptian traders in acquiring the 200,000 tons necessary for the winter crop. The Ministry of Supply made the difficult decision to directly acquire 150,000 tons and ration fertilizer in that and coming seasons. The government was only able to obtain 85,000 tons by early 1941, which they held in reserve until the coming year.<sup>19</sup> The average farmer only received only 100 kg of nitrates per feddan for wheat sown for harvest in May 1941, where prewar usage had been about 175 kg per feddan. Because of corruption in distribution, smaller peasants received much less than this. Robert Vitalis has chronicled the epic 20-year

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<sup>16</sup> In the First World War, the Allied blockade of Chilean nitrate caused the German military to commit resources to developing the synthesis of artificial nitrates for fertilizers and explosives. Carl Bosch and Franz Haber of BASF (later the largest component of IG Farben) developed a chemical method that could capture surplus nitrogen from petrochemical refinery processes into ammonia, an important building block for fertilizer.

<sup>17</sup> Alan Richards, *Egypt's Agricultural Development, 1800-1980: Technical and Social Change* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982), 131.

<sup>18</sup> Mirko Lamer, *The World Fertilizer Economy* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1957), 643.

<sup>19</sup> DWQ 0081-088103, Memorandum from the Ministry of Finance to the Council of Ministers, 2 Feb. 1941

capitalist competition to build a fertilizer plant connected to a hydroelectric power plant in Aswan as an import substitution solution, but from the minute the fertilizer shortage became apparent in 1940, importing the machinery to build a factory rather than importing the finished product fell to low priority.<sup>20</sup> The control over this job was subject to intense business group infighting, and the plant was not completed until long after the war and shortages were over.

Despite state administrators' long experience planning agricultural sowing schedules in order to distribute irrigation water fairly, Egyptian government intelligence about the final crop yield and the private domestic trade of produce remained rudimentary. Government officials were taken aback when wheat did not begin arriving on the market after the harvest in May 1941. Estimates were made that the wheat harvest was one sixth smaller than average, and trade officials suspected producers had begun hoarding their crop in anticipation of an increase in the government's fixed prices. The inevitable price increase came June 2, but it was accompanied with a mandate by military proclamation for bakers to mix 10% rice or corn flour into their dough. Still, the bakers of Cairo and Alexandria went on strike for several days because many could not obtain enough flour of any variety to fulfill demand.<sup>21</sup> In response, the British military released some of its stocks of flour purchased from the 1940 crop and canceled any further purchases. The British Ministry of Food also arranged emergency consignments of wheat from Australia. With the temporary shortage of flour ended, private sales began to

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide: Business Conflict and the End of Empire in Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> DWQ 0081-026615, Alexandria Chamber of Commerce to Egyptian Federation of Industries, 25 Oct. 1945. See also Kirk, *The Middle East in the War*, 202.

resume, especially from poorer peasants who could not afford to hoard for very long, although periodic shortages and bakery strikes were a feature of the following year.

While this first wheat supply crisis was being resolved, Egypt's cotton was ripening in the field, and with it, the recurring political struggle over its sale. The government had passed a few minor laws restricting the sowing of cotton in the prior year. But these laws failed to decrease the size of the crop, which was estimated again to be 9 million qintars.<sup>22</sup> With the British now bailing the government out with supplies of wheat, they had much greater leverage to demand far stricter reductions in cotton for the coming season, so that food crops could be grown instead.<sup>23</sup> Although no British officials ever explicitly threatened either cutting off the emergency wheat or simply leaving the cotton unfunded, which could ruin small cotton growers, their firm position forced parliament to compromise in key areas. In the final settlement, Parliament passed a law restricting cotton acreage to 27% of land in the delta and 23% in Upper Egypt. This ultimately reduced the size of the following year's cotton crop by one third.

By the autumn of 1941, policies governing the supply of fertilizer and the growth and marketing of cotton and wheat had become inextricably linked. The British would henceforth use their monopoly control over foreign trade into Egypt, especially on the imports of fertilizer, to negotiate British prerogatives in Egypt's agricultural policies. They facilitated this mode of control, in Egypt and across the region including Iran after

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<sup>22</sup> 0081-075556 410218 Law 6, restricting cotton As Promulgated 410220, Law 6 forbids the cultivation of cotton on land used for Shitawi crops in the 1940-41 season, that is, Fuul, Halaba, Lentils, Kitan or Barley.

<sup>23</sup> FO 371-35556 J 1850. Memo by Evelyn Baring (the second son of Lord Cromer), 14 Nov 1941. They also demanded a lower price for cotton, despite sharp increases in the American price, monopoly control on exports for the purchasing commission, and even that the government impose new direct taxes to finance the Egyptian share of the purchases. The government agreed to maintain the purchase price at 1940 levels shared equally between the British and Egyptian governments, with a 15% bonus paid by solely the Egyptian government. The Egyptian side of the commission financed part of its purchase and the bonus with an LE 17 million bond issue (subscribed, naturally, by many of the cotton growers from which the commission bought).

the British and Russian invasions there in August, by creating the Middle East Supply Center. The MESC's most important task was the collection of intelligence about agricultural production and consumption in the region for the purpose of planning import allocations that it designed to determine local economic policies. The officers of the MESC, along with British Commercial Counselor Charles Empson, became the primary representatives in a series of Anglo-Egyptian joint supply committees in which these policies were hammered out on the subject of wheat, cotton, sugar, nitrates and internal transport, among other subjects.

Egyptian and British administrators fought intensely over the form and powers of these committees for the following year. In the last several months before the implosion of his ministry, Husayn Sirri was caught between the intransigence of the large landowners in parliament who refused to pass or enforce tougher measures to obtain agricultural produce at fixed prices, and the historically novel situation that certain imported foods or fertilizer were unavailable at any price. To give some credit to Sirri, the political problems of shifting the entrenched political-economic system of Egypt were familiar and permanent, while the shipping outlook could shift from positive to negative depending on how disastrous the German U-boat attacks were in the North Atlantic month after month. British plans and promises for deliveries frequently changed at the last minute. While the MESC was in its infancy, before many of the joint committees mentioned above existed, Sirri made several efforts to obtain imported supplies directly from their sources, only to be rebuffed by the British Ministry of War Transport through Lampson. Sirri sent Lampson a schedule of imports of roughly 30,000 tons of fertilizer and 30,000 tons of either wheat or corn per month from November until August 1942. He

appealed to Lampson in the political elite's shared language of social crisis: "the shortage of bread which is one of the staple foods of the people would be liable to give rise to disturbances. It is imperative for the sake of public security and tranquility that its supply should be assured."<sup>24</sup>

However much Lampson agreed with that sentiment, he made forceful moves to impress upon Sirri the need to make Egyptian farmers produce more food. With the Ministry of War Transport at his back, he first sought to end the Egyptian tactic of seeking supplies outside of British control: not only would this lead to confused "double-booking" of cargo space in some cases, he said, "direct negotiation of this nature are contrary to Egypt's own interest since they tend to raise prices against the British authorities and hence against the Egyptian government themselves."<sup>25</sup> The recent creation of the MESC aimed to reduce the region's reliance on imports to the greatest extent possible, which would require even further reforms in domestic policy. As Lampson wrote,

... The supplies of cereals on the way to the Middle East have to be allocated where the need is greatest. While information as to stocks is being provided by other territories concerned, so that a clear picture of the wheat position there will emerge no such information has so far been provided for Egypt. (underline in original)... In fact, with barely six months passed since the last local wheat harvest, the only assumption can be drawn, failing evidence to the contrary, is that

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<sup>24</sup> DWQ 0081-026615 Sirri to Lampson 27 Sep. 1941.

<sup>25</sup> DWQ 026615, Lampson to Sirri 10 Nov. 1941.

a real condition of shortage cannot yet have been reached in Egypt and that considerable stocks of wheat must exist in the country.<sup>26</sup>

In his last message on the subject before his resignation, Sirri reminded Lampson that he had passed military proclamations requiring all agricultural growers to declare their stocks of wheat in September, but that the amount they discovered was far less than the British estimates. In his last weeks as prime minister, Sirri had also achieved another restriction on cotton sowing to 23 and 15 percent in lower and upper Egypt respectively, and prohibited letting any land lie fallow in the summer season.<sup>27</sup> Strategically released wheat imports, even 30,000 tons out of to a total crop of 1.12 million tons, kept the market liquid and prevented serious unrest through 1941. But the prioritization of wheat over fertilizer meant effectively *no fertilizer* was imported for the last half of the year, with disastrous long-term effects on agricultural yields.

The advent of the Wafd in February 1942 accelerated government control of agricultural production. By putting the Wafd in government, the British had neutralized the strongest landowner opposition to policies designed to grow more wheat. Instead, the Wafd acquired full responsibility for feeding the nation. Unlike Sirri, Al-Nahhas and the Wafd-dominated parliament (after the March 1942 parliamentary elections) had the political capital to execute the policies. Getting al-Nahhas to play a more proactive role in economic management took further persuasion on the part of the British, but once the Wafd was committed to state ownership of wheat, it applied itself with aplomb to prosecuting the policy to its advantage.

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<sup>26</sup> DWQ 0081-026615 Lampson to Sirri, December 1, 1941. (Underline in original)

<sup>27</sup> DWQ 0081-026615, Sirri to Lampson, 24 Jan. 1942.

Sirri's failure demonstrated that a good price alone was not going to lure grain hoarders to sell, so al-Nahas passed military proclamations in April to the effect that the government was directly acquiring 5.5 million out of an estimated total 8 million ardebs for town consumption and reserves by making compulsory purchases from every cultivator according to his means (1 ardeb of wheat = 150 kg). However, the initial policy contained a regressive loophole: it banned private trade only until the end of August. This forced smaller-scale cultivators who needed to pay creditors to sell to the government early at the fixed price. At the same time, it allowed large landowners to hoard the majority of their crop in anticipation of private trade resuming or an increase in the government price. When the wheat stocks ran out once again just before the harvest in May 1942, the British arranged for a last minute loan of 24,000 tons of wheat directly from imported British military reserves (see Figure 4.2), but only if the Wafd promised to pay back the loan before the next crop and to create a joint committee with MESC members so they could monitor the progress of the government scheme.<sup>28</sup> It was the pressure of this committee, after the first month of collections pulled in a disappointing 1.3 million ardebs, that forced al-Nahas to end any time or quantity limits to the government monopoly.<sup>29</sup> Once a policy of total government acquisition was clarified in an announcement in *Al-Ahram* newspaper on June 26 (drafted in the joint committee's third meeting,) wheat deliveries from the countryside began to arrive in large quantities at the government storehouses.

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<sup>28</sup> FO 922/65, Minutes of meeting between British authorities, Makram 'Ebeid and Amin Osman, 21 May 1942.

<sup>29</sup> FO 922/65, Meeting between RGA Jackson, MESC and Ahmad Hamza, Minister of Supplies. 16 June 1942.



The 1942 summer season was the first crop after the major cotton restrictions had been passed. Extra barley planting resulted in a large surplus, and trade in this grain was not restricted. However, yields on maize fell precipitously, in part because the government fertilizer allowance had been reduced to a mere 20 kg per feddan for this crop. The government therefore changed the subsidized bread mixture formula to include more barley. By the next wheat harvest in May 1943, the government had obtained 4.4 million ardebs of wheat. This was lower than their target of 5.5 million in the prior year, but with total consumption in the city governorates and provincial centers of just less than 4 million ardebs, they were able to repay the British military wheat loan from the year before and keep a stock of 400,000 ardebs as the new wheat came in.<sup>30</sup> In fact, the government's overconfidence in its monopoly control on grain allowed it to slacken enforcement of cotton restrictions in the following 1944 wheat season, which combined with soil exhaustion led to the worst wheat crop of the war and renewed shortages from 1944 to 1945.

With Egypt nearly self-sufficient in wheat after mid-1942, the British shifted quickly to use fertilizer and machinery imports as leverage to obtain Egyptian surpluses of two crucial food crops for its empire: rice for its South Asian colonies and sugar for redistribution in the region, again to reduce long distance shipping. Climatic conditions and crop rotations in the Egyptian delta are ideal for growing a large amount of rice. Unlike wheat, rice was not the principal staple of the Egyptian diet, and there was always a surplus. With restrictions on cotton, this surplus increased.

After losing Burma to the Japanese military at the end of April 1942, Britain desperately needed rice for Ceylon, but it was only able to obtain a surplus of 15,000 tons

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<sup>30</sup> FO 922/66 Joint Wheat Commission statistical annex, 15 May 1943.

from mainland India. By late 1942, they wished to obtain the estimated 250,000 ton rice surplus from Egypt. Al-Nahhas quickly imposed a LE 50 per ton export tax on rice, which sold for only LE 23 domestically, to exploit high global prices. Lampson described this as the “first real trial of strength” with al-Nahhas, and was uncharacteristically willing to export the rice by subterfuge or force if necessary.<sup>31</sup> The commercial wing of the British Embassy instructed the British office of the joint censorship board to begin secretly culling Egyptian letters and telegrams for any information about the commercial disposal of rice (and sugar).<sup>32</sup>

At this point, the institutional specialization of the British war bureaucracy began causing internecine competition. The MESC was interested in keeping domestic affairs in the Middle Eastern stable. The Ministry of War Transport wanted only to maximize free shipping space. The Ministry of Food needed to acquire food for areas outside the Middle East. Finally, the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation, the private but not-for-profit corporation that was actually financing and executing the purchasing deals wished to obtain the best price. Although 75,000 tons of rice were guaranteed in the deal connected to the 1942 loan of wheat, the Egyptians held out for a confirmed schedule of nitrate fertilizer imports before making a deal for the remainder.<sup>33</sup> The Ministry of War Transport was generally dismissive of the “Egyptian addiction to nitrate,” and was

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<sup>31</sup> FO 371/31557, J 5136, Nahhas to Foreign Office, 15 Dec. 1942. Moreover, he wished to sell the rice by competitive auction to the British and private traders, who could drive the price up, instead of on a cooperative “cost plus” basis with the British government.

<sup>32</sup> FO 371/35557, J 814, Censorship Rice Report no. 8, 1 Feb 1943. In particular, Egyptian traders were receiving strong inquiries from Turkey and Syria for the rice despite the high export taxes.

<sup>33</sup> FO 371/35557, Anthony Eden to Johnstone, Department of Overseas Trade, 23 Feb 1943. Eden wrote, “We expected to be able to supply Egypt during 1943 on the reduced scale of 10,000 tons [of fertilizer] a month. Their own estimate of their needs was over twice as much. We were going to use this nitrate as our big stick to secure not only this year’s harvest but also a lien on the next harvest. Then suddenly... we were faced with a very different situation. Owing to the restriction on shipping from North America we were told by the ministry of war transport that no more shipments of nitrate could be programmed for an indefinite number of months ahead.”

reluctant to send any at the end of 1942. However, the pressure of the Foreign Office forced the ministry to reallocate space to fertilizer to guarantee the 10,000 tons. In return, Egypt waived the export taxes on rice, sold 75,000 tons of milled rice at a fixed price of LE 25 per ton and allowed the MESC to acquire a further 83,000 tons on the open market at slightly higher prices and a second 75,000-ton contract from the Egyptian government in June 1943.<sup>34</sup> After observing the relative success of the state wheat monopoly, the Egyptian government shifted to a compulsory purchasing scheme for the October 1943 rice crop. But rather than creating it to ensure enough food for Egyptians directly, al-Nahas instituted this policy to secure his long-negotiated British fertilizer-for-rice bargain.

Although the amounts involved were smaller than the rice crop, supplying the British with sugar was politically more challenging because the private sugar monopoly was under the control of powerful industrialist Ahmed ‘Abbud.<sup>35</sup> The Egyptian government created protectionist tariffs in 1931 and granted the Sugar Company a domestic monopoly to ward off the effects of depressed global sugar prices. In return, the company’s convention granted an average 80% of the company’s profits to the government. However, this 10-year agreement expired in 1941, and Parliament and ‘Abbud battled over a new contract for three years. In this time, the company ceased remitting the government’s share of profits. ‘Abbud was in no hurry, because there was no chance that effective competition to the company’s hegemony could exist under war conditions. He took this opportunity to consolidate his control over the company, after

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<sup>34</sup> Lloyd, *Food and Inflation*, 250. However, this contract fell short by 22,000 tons.

<sup>35</sup> Mitchell, *Rule of Experts*, 19-53. Chapter one examines the connection between the sugar monopoly and the 1944 outbreak of famine and malaria in Upper Egypt, where most of the sugar cane is grown, spread by mosquitoes breeding in standing water after the extension of irrigation in these areas. The DDT used to fight mosquitos was distilled from sugar!

purchasing the outstanding shares of Henri Naus Bey, a Belgian industrialist who had been a major shareholder, upon Naus' death in 1938.<sup>36</sup>

After the ban on growing cotton in basin irrigation areas of Upper Egypt in 1942, 'Abbud persuaded his suppliers to commit their summer season to growing more sugar cane. In return, the sugar company required more machinery to process the raw cane. 'Abbud took advantage of his independence from government control to direct a much larger portion of his profits towards reinvestment in the company, and he made increasing demands on imports from the British in exchange for sugar exports. 'Abbud asked for LE 41 per ton, while the Ministry of Food wished to pay LE 25. The British began by bluffing 'Abbud, claiming in December 1942 that they would not negotiate on price as they had obtained supplies elsewhere.<sup>37</sup> After six months of long negotiations, 'Abbud finally agreed to sell 60,000 tons of sugar in June 1943 for LE 27 per ton as a loan that the British would sell back to the company at the same price after the war. There is little doubt 'Abbud was aided in these negotiations by the ascent of his principal ally in the Wafd party, Amin Osman, who had become Minister of Finance at the end of 1942. After long negotiations, Osman was able to push a new convention through opposition in the senate that essentially forgave all the government share of profit 'Abbud had used in the intervening years.<sup>38</sup> The government also allowed a sharp increase in the fixed domestic retail sugar price, which helped satisfy 'Abbud when the 1944 crop had very little surplus to export to the British at such high prices. The public's emotional connection to consumer goods, and in particular the few luxuries the masses could afford like sugar, tea

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<sup>36</sup> This narrative is condensed from "Sugar Convention Approved," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 25 July 1944.

<sup>37</sup> FO 371/35556 UKCC to Abboud, 30 Dec 1942.

<sup>38</sup> FO 371/41341 Killearn to FO, 27 July 1944. Technically, a reserve fund of LE 3.5 million to finance the factory expansions that subsumed a large portion of the government's ostensible share of profit reserved from 1941-1943.

and tobacco, meant 'Abbud was the target of public rage when these negotiations became public.

#### CARROT AND STICK: MODES OF POLICY ENFORCEMENT

Uncertainty in economic management at the level of international diplomacy made for chaos in the domestic execution of supply policies. The dissonance between the official ideology that war measures were taken in the interest of the public security, and the visible reality of bad implementation and corruption, had a demoralizing effect on Egyptian society. This was not lost on the media or the *effendi* bureaucrats whom the media mainly addressed.

Before the start of mandatory purchases in 1942, the Ministry of Supply had no mission other than to act as vendor for the small amounts of grain peasants decided to sell it, and as the state wholesaler of rationed kerosene. This administration was at first a ministry in name only, because it had none of its own employees, but merely used employees attached to it from the commerce and industry, interior and finance ministries part time. It had no separate office space and it had no budget in 1940 and early 1941. In the 1941-1942 budget, parliament allocated it exactly LE 4,079. Most importantly, the Minister of Supply had no more authority than a secretary within the Supreme Council of Supplies, the ministerial committee that determined supply policy.

After the Wafd came to power and began building up the ministry, the new director of the Supply Ministry complaints department, 'Abdel Halim Nusayr, wrote, "The first minister was appointed without jurisdiction, which made the ministry like a

body without a soul or a soldier without a weapon.”<sup>39</sup> Having multiple ministries collaborate on a single issue could produce headaches enough, but the supply bureaucracy was required both to arrange the acquisition and distribution of government supplies and also to stop crimes either in the retailing of these supplies or infringement of price controls on many other privately traded goods. Even after bread flour was subsidized and its formula fixed in June 1941, there was no coordination between the Ministry of Supply and the Ministry of Interior in matters of surveillance, arrest and prosecution of corrupt millers and bakers. As discussed in prior chapters, this ministry’s authority was mostly founded on military proclamations under the state of siege, and in 1941, the attributes of the military courts, military parquet and their relationship to the police and Ministry of Interior were also still vague. Under Nusayr’s plan, supply ministry officials became the chief repository of investigation reports of supply code violations used by the police, parquet, and the Military Governor’s office. He also requested monthly reports from the military parquet on the status of all cases seen by the military courts, to anticipate any of the defendants’ semi-formal appeals to the military governor to suspend the judgment.<sup>40</sup> These reforms did not come too soon, because the volume of criminal supply cases tripled over the course of 1942. These bureaucratic forms continued developing over the course of the war. Al-Nahhas only finally made the Minister of Supply the top authority in matters of legal execution of supply laws and

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<sup>39</sup> DWQ 0069-005607, ‘Abdel Halim Nusayr, Secret report on the Supply complaints department, 8 June, 1942.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. In practice, as discussed in Chapter 2, El-Nahhas built up the military governor’s office to perform this task, and to get analysis from the government legal office.

military proclamations in July 1943;<sup>41</sup> A permanent office of the military parquet was only set up at the Ministry of Supply in 1945.<sup>42</sup>

As a repressive apparatus, the Ministry of Supply exerted much more of its energy on the urban black market than either on rural distribution problems or on rural grain requisition. However, I will analyze its role in managing agricultural production and in building wholesale reserves here, and its role in distribution in the final section.

It is important to stress again that the compulsory purchase of wheat starting in 1942 was a last-resort measure into which the British technocrats had to push the Egyptians. The first and most important mechanisms to compel farmers to grow the desired mixture of crops and to sell them to the government, were sale price and the availability of cheap credit. The wholesale price of unmilled wheat and maize had been fixed at LE 1.5 per ardeb at the start of the war. In 1941, during the first shortage, the government raised the price to LE 2, which was in line with the general rise in the cost of living and probably helped end that temporary crisis. The Wafd raised wheat prices to LE 3 shortly after taking office, despite British worries this could cause annual subsidies to reach LE 5 million. When the government decided it wanted to prioritize certain crops like wheat, maize or barley, it would offer advances through the Agricultural Credit Bank at low rates and at the new price, increased prices to peasants who committed to sow the target areas (before they became mandatory).<sup>43</sup> The government planned to further

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<sup>41</sup> DWQ 0081-019346, Council of Ministers decree defining attributes of Minister of Supply, July 1, 1943. Ahmad Hamza, Ministry of Supply had written to El-Nahhas on April 19, 1943, to complain that his hands were still bound by his inferior position in the bureaucracy. El-Nahhas first made him head of the Supreme Council of Supply on June 6, 1943 by Council of Ministers Decree. Both documents from DWQ 0081-26611.

<sup>42</sup> DWQ 0081-121194, Council of Ministers decree creating a permanent office military parquet at ministry of supplies, April 7, 1945.

<sup>43</sup> DWQ 0081-023722, National Bank of Egypt governor Nixon to Sabry, 27 July 1940. Nixon pointed out peasants would use such advances for their cotton picking expenses, and thus urged him to reach a

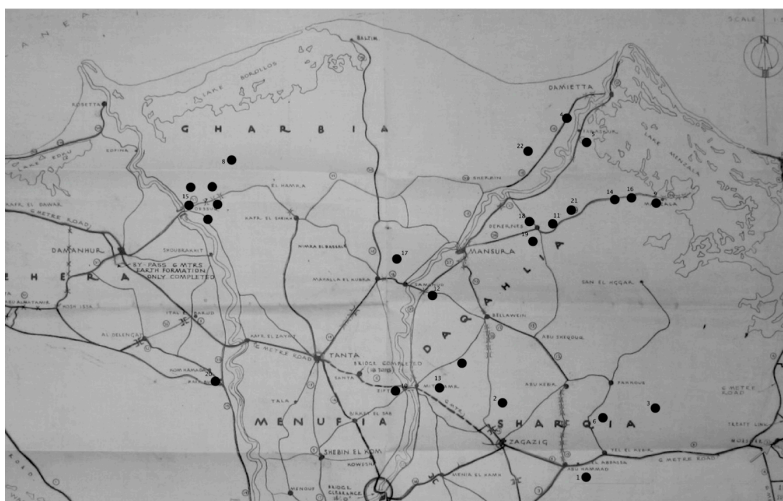


Figure 4.1: Map of the northern Nile Delta showing the location of villages that sent petitions against government assessments for mandatory wheat purchases in April 1942. DWQ 0069-009916, Petitions to the King from farmers in: (from Al-Sharqiya) 'Azazi, Markaz Fāqūs and Abu Hammād, (from Al-Daqhaliya), Mit Al-Qums, Um Al-Rizq, Kafr Sa'ad, Farskur, Al-Manzala, Mit Khouli Mu'min, Markaz Mit Ghamr, Markaz Aga, Markaz Dikirmis, Al-Gamaliya, Mit Tamama and Mit Salsil, (from Al-Gharbiya) Markaz Disūq, Uşayfir, Markaz San'a, and (from Al-Beheira) Kom Hamada. 20-23 April, 1942. Map: from WO 201/2811 Roads in Egypt," 17 Jan. 1945.)

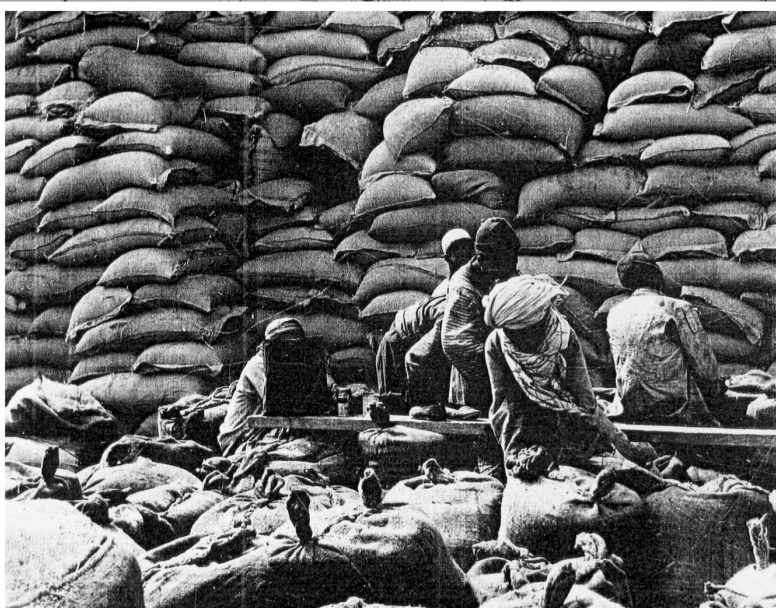


Figure 4.2. Egyptian dockworkers unload emergency British consignments of wheat imported from Australia to cover the gap between consumption in Egyptian cities and dwindling stocks in government storehouses. February 28, 1942. Imperial War Museum, Photo Archive E 8931.

increase the price for the 1944 wheat crop to LE 4 per ardeb in late 1943. British Commercial Counselor Terrence Shone attempted to intervene with al-Nahas, warning that this decision would fuel inflation. More important to the British was the political effect in neighboring countries under MESC supervision that would expect similar price increases that the British could not afford to subsidize. Al-Nahas proceeded with the plan anyway.<sup>44</sup> Postwar calculations put the wheat subsidy bill between 1942 and 1945 at

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settlement with the British about the purchasing commission. See also DWQ 0081-34209 Ministry of Finance memo, 30 June 1941.

<sup>44</sup> DWQ 0081-26616, Shone to Nahas, 20 Oct 1943.



LE 5.34 million, which was not as large as the British forecast because of reduced consumption overall.<sup>45</sup> Even though postwar governments lowered the official grain prices in a temporary bid at deflation, Egypt has never abandoned the wheat subsidy until the present day, with remarkable effects on its consumption across the country.

Farmers recognized the earlier means of government intervention as legitimate, since they had been used in World War I and during the Great Depression. However, the compulsory government buying scheme launched in 1942 was an unpopular innovation. Upon the announcement of the scheme in April 1942 in Military Proclamation 243, an avalanche of peasant petitions protesting the decision arrived in Cairo. Although the Prime Minister had issued the military proclamation and the Ministry of Supply would be carrying out the task, petitioners frequently sent copies directly to the King, and the King's Diwan remained a clearinghouse for petitions on all subjects in the 1940s.<sup>46</sup> Like many peasant petitions for aid in time of crop failure or a problem shared by a whole locality, single petitions contain as many as 50 signatures from villagers and they were frequently addressed in the voice (if not the pen) of the 'umda or shaykh.

About 30 petitions from a broad but geographically bounded region in the north Nile Delta between April 20 and 25, 1942 are present in the 'Abdin palace archival unit in the Egyptian National Archive (see map, Figure 4.1). They uniformly complained that the government assessment for their wheat, the first three ardebs produced per feddan, was more than their land had produced that year. Complying with this new law would

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<sup>45</sup> DWQ 0081-030429, Ministry of Trade and Industry to Council of Ministers, 24 April 1946.

<sup>46</sup> John T. Chalcraft, *The Striking Cabbies of Cairo and Other Stories: Crafts and Guilds in Egypt, 1863-1914* (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 2004) extensively examines the continuation of the Ottoman-style culture of petitioning after the start of the British occupation and rise of a modern bureaucracy.

leave them with no sowing seed or wheat for home consumption.<sup>47</sup> Many of these northern villages were situated on land that had been reclaimed from marshy lakes within the past 50 years. The peasants of Al-Gamaleya in Al-Daqhaliya, specifically wrote “Our land is situated on the banks of Lake Manzala and is immersed in salty water and cannot produce wheat... It is not fair that our food should be taken away while we are hungry and poor. We appeal to the mercy of His Majesty the King... .” The breadth of this campaign indicates there was a breakdown in the capacity of the Ministry of Supply to properly assess appropriate demands across different regions in the country.<sup>48</sup>

Mahmoud Ahmad ‘Isa, a proprietor of 40 feddans in Nag Hammadi fought with his tenants, who paid rent in kind rather than cash, over their obligations to each other in light of the new rule. He petitioned the king in different language about the new policy: “We are in an era of the state of siege, the Military Governor General and a war emergency,” he wrote, “and this has resulted in the looting of the wheat we have grown and threshed and cleaned ourselves. If the landowner complains he’s the victim and informs the government, they refuse to adjust the amount. The Ministry of Supply demands wheat from me, and then the Ministry of Finance also demands my wealth. So now it seems as if I don’t own my own crop anymore, which I have worked on all year....”<sup>49</sup> Far more powerful landowners in parliament expressed similar sentiments

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<sup>47</sup> DWQ 0069-009916, Petitions to the King from farmers in: (from Al-Sharqiya) ‘Azazi, Markaz Fāqūs and Abu Hammād, (from Al-Daqhaliya), Mit Al-Qumṣ, Um Al-Rizq, Kafr Sa’ad, Farskur, Al-Manzala, Mit Khouli Mu‘min, Markaz Mit Ghamr, Markaz Aga, Markaz Dikiris, Al-Gamaliya, Mit Tamama and Mit Salsil, (from Al-Gharbiya) Markaz Disūq, Uṣayfir, Markaz Sanṭa, and (from Al-Beheira) Kom Hamada. 20-23 April, 1942.

<sup>48</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture faced similar difficulty in reassessing requisition amounts during the 1944 wheat harvest, the worst of the war. The Ministry of Social Affairs Fellaḥ Department forwarded the complaint of a cooperative in Markaz ‘Ashmoun, al-Manufiya, that their yields were 1-3 ardebs per feddan, less than the government request. DWQ 4029-000175, Memo, Fellaḥ Dept. Director to Vice Minister of Social Affairs, 1 July, 1944.

<sup>49</sup> DWQ 0069-00916, Petition from Mahmoud Ahmad ‘Isa to the King, 29 June 1942.

about the government overstepping its bounds and infringing on the sanctity of private property. However, the biggest landowners, who owned one or more *'ezbas* (private villages with associated plantations that employed both sharecroppers and wage labor), had always controlled the marketing of their tenants' crops, and so adapted quite handily to exploiting the situation to the greatest extent they could.

The penalties legislated in the 1942 military proclamations were potentially ruinous for growers considering hoarding their grain or selling it on the black market. While the government paid LE 3 for an ardeb of wheat, and the most a small peasant could hope to profit from cultivating a feddan of wheat at that price was LE 5 to 10, the standard punishment in military court for not delivering the compulsory share of wheat was three months in prison and *LE 6 pounds* for each ardeb owed. Anyone caught transporting wheat without the proper license was assumed to be engaging in the illegal black market grain trade and charged anywhere from LE 20 to 50. Larger landowners could exploit their social position and cash reserves to hoard their yield more effectively, holding out through the summer in response to any rumor that the government would make a latter requisition of grain for the next season's sowing seed at a higher price than the current offer. Meanwhile, to make ends meet, smallholders either had to sell to the government immediately, or risk selling to the black market. The government made a few large institutions the only legitimate buyers of wheat, like the Agricultural Credit Bank and Barclays, which operated grain storage areas around the country. MESC director R.G.A. Jackson noted, "The banks have been deducting all the taxes instead of only a quarter and the whole of the debts due to the Credit Agricole and many of the fellahin have only received literally a few milliemes for the wheat they have delivered to the

Govt. [Black market] merchants have been active, offering as much as six pounds an ardeb (i.e., double the price)...<sup>50</sup>

British land investor W.A. Lancaster, who corresponded with the MESC staff on agricultural affairs in this period, confirmed in July 1942, that the upper class was immune to the military courts. “It would seem that when severe measures are taken this has so far applied chiefly to small unimportant growers,” he wrote.<sup>51</sup> In council with the other MESC country managers, Empson complained that while the overall wheat income was on target, the Egyptian supply police and judiciary measures were far too lenient.<sup>52</sup> My detailed survey of military cases in the last three months of 1942 shows that of the cases where the number of ardebs of wheat hoarded is noted, indeed very few charges exceeded three or four ardebs, roughly equivalent to the government share from one cultivated feddan.<sup>53</sup> But a fine of LE 20 and three months in prison could ruin a small peasant family. Perhaps this is why, of the 537 farm hoarding cases in this three-month period, al-Nahhas as military governor upheld convictions on only 48% of them. The courts found 18% innocent, and the military governor’s bureaucracy suspended or canceled a further 34% of the sentences. This was the highest rate of suspension of fines or sentences for any variety of military crime. Despite increasingly harsh punishments, al-Nahhas was constantly granting exceptions to the rule, for example, mandating in Law 81 of 1944 suspended sentences if peasants delivered the full amount of grain after their

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<sup>50</sup> FO 922/65 MESC memo, Summary of Cereals Situation in Egypt, RGA Jackson. 23-25 June 1942. Starting in May 1942, the Anglo-Egyptian Joint Wheat committee, and its MESC British staff adjunct to the Egyptian Ministry of Supply, provide a much more complete record than the Egyptian National Archive holding of Supply Ministry records.

<sup>51</sup> FO 922/65 WA Lancaster to Jackson, 9 July 1942.

<sup>52</sup> FO 371/35557, J 855, Minutes of Cereals Control Conference, 12-13 Nov. 1942.

<sup>53</sup> DWQ 0081-030436, analysis of court ledgers from October-December 1942.

arrest but before their first court date.<sup>54</sup> On the other hand, when farmer Qabil Ahmad ‘Ali beat a village guard who demanded his wheat with the butt of his rifle, he was sentenced to two years in prison in military court.<sup>55</sup> Rural areas were the Wafd Party’s largest and most solid source of electoral support. It seems that al-Nahhas and the Ministry of Supply were satisfied with using the courts as a tool to intimidate individual peasants into sending wheat rather than creating deterrence through punishment.

### COOPERATIVES: HELPING THE MIDDLE CLASS

Even as the military courts and police managed to extract the grain that was grown in the countryside for use in the cities, the agricultural bureaucracy also sought a way to more adequately control the circulation in the rural economy at the lowest cost possible. Here the government’s interests coincided with a long-running movement for social reform in the countryside — rural cooperatives for seed, fertilizer, fuel and other consumer goods. Cooperatives had existed in Egypt since the 1907 recession, when ‘Umar Lotfy set up eleven outlets in the environs of Cairo and a central financing arm to deal directly with banks, which had not been interested in small rural clients. A 1911 law outlawing mortgage foreclosures on landholdings smaller than five feddans, intended to help small landowners, in effect further curtailed the credit available to them. Under the British protectorate during the First World War, no new legislation was passed to give encouragement to form new cooperatives. The concept did not really take off until the Great Depression and the founding of the Agricultural Credit Bank in 1931, which was

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<sup>54</sup> DWQ 0081-030813, Disuq Military Misdemeanor 287 for 1944, Ahmad Muhammad Hassan delivered his wheat on 9 June 1944, before his 23 Oct. 1944 court hearing. Tanta Military Misdemeanor 523 for 1944, Muhammad Muhammad Hūd delivered his wheat on 17 June 1944, before his 4 Sept. 1944 hearing. Both judgements were suspended.

<sup>55</sup> DWQ 0081-030610, Memorandum on Qena Military Felony 90 of 1944, 15 May 1944.

given a mandate to lend to cooperatives at 5%, and 4% for periods longer than one year, down from a customary 9% from commercial banks and even higher rates from rural moneylenders.<sup>56</sup> However, a policy of lending at even lower interest to qualified individuals (rather than only to cooperatives), who were mainly holders of one half to five feddans, again slowed the development of the organizations. The number of cooperatives in Egypt increased at the rate of about 50 per year in the '30s to reach 800, with 100,000 members and about LE 200,000 in capital in 1939.<sup>57</sup>

The Ministry of Social Affairs assumed the co-operatives portfolio from the Ministry of Agriculture after the ministry's creation in mid-1939, and the social scientific training and enthusiasm of its new employees gave the movement a more evangelical aspect. Muhammad al-'Ashmawi Bey, a judicial employee of the ministry and vice president of the Union for Social Reform, waxed lyrical in *Social Affairs Magazine*, the official ministry organ, about the benefits of cooperation on all scales of life in 1942.<sup>58</sup> He employs some typical reformist tropes, scolding absentee landlords and the "enlightened" classes of ignoring the needs of their tenants and poorer, less-educated neighbors. This he claims, results in an absence of vision, even among the founders of new co-operative societies: "The societies are empty of the true spirit of cooperation, but are rather stamped with materialism. They have become an instrument for cliques of members to seek profit over others..."<sup>59</sup> As with social reform elsewhere, it was not enough to al-'Ashmawi that the cooperative members go through the motions of creating

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<sup>56</sup> DWQ 4029-000753, Memorandum on the development of the Cooperative Movement, Office of the Minister of Agriculture, 5 Mar. 1934.

<sup>57</sup> FO 922/94 Ministry of War Transport report, "The Cooperative Movement in Egypt," by the Foreign Research and Press Service, Balliol College, Oxford, 24 Dec. 1943.

<sup>58</sup> Muhammad Al-'Ashmawi, "Athar Al-Ta'āwun fil-Al-Islāḥ Al-Ijtimā'ī" ("The Effect of Cooperation on Social Reform"), *Social Affairs Magazine*, Feb. 1942, 18-21.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

the cooperative corporations. He believed that they needed to be properly educated in the spirit of cooperation and its role in the development of the national state for the co-operative societies to have their desired effect.

The exigencies of war, however, meant the cooperatives could serve as a tool to prevent the peasantry's exploitation by moneylenders and traders in a time of scarcity and market confusion. The bulk of day-to-day work for the Ministry of Social Affairs' Co-op department therefore concerned two issues: regulating the relations between the Agricultural Credit Bank and the cooperatives, and ensuring fertilizer (and, increasingly, consumer goods like sugar and fabric) was properly distributed through the cooperatives. The rapid expansion of the agricultural cooperatives during the first years of the Great Depression occurred without strong government oversight, or even a legal regulatory framework. By 1939, many had fallen into disarray and had long-term unpaid debts to the Credit Agricole because of bad management. As a result, the Credit Agricole was unwilling to extend new credit to the co-ops.<sup>60</sup> 'Abd al-Hamid Radwan, the secretary of the Cooperative Union of Sahragat al-Kubra in al-Daqhaliya, wrote a detailed memorandum to Ahmad Hussein and 'Abd al-Latif Amer, the directors of the Peasant and Co-operative departments respectively, proposing a new system of government oversight to reform the system.<sup>61</sup> Although his complaints principally focus on the inflexibility of the Agricultural Credit Bank to renegotiate the terms of bad loans, and its propensity to lend to individuals, his ambitious slate of suggestions are oriented more towards the borrowers' actions than the bank's. He proposed the co-ops should start

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<sup>60</sup> FO 922/94 Ministry of War Transport report, "The Cooperative Movement in Egypt," by the Foreign Research and Press Service, Balliol College, Oxford, 24 Dec. 1943. cf. *Al Ahrām*, 22. Feb 1940.

<sup>61</sup> DWQ 4029-000175, 'Abd al-Hamid Radwan, Secretary of the Cooperative Union of Şahragat Al Kubra, to the Ministry of Social Affairs. 25 Oct. 1943.

submitting weekly balance sheets, refuse loans to members larger than 150% of the value of their shares and bar delinquent borrowers immediately and begin repossession procedures. More broadly, he wishes for greater guidance from the Bank on how to assign credit and fertilizer to individuals, and for the local *'umda* or *shaykh* to make an official recommendation of creditworthiness to the Ministry and Bank. These departments had already increased their informal surveillance under the Wafdist expansion, and many of Radwan's suggestions shortly became enshrined in the 1944 Co-operatives law. Besides more structured legal guarantees to the Bank for repayment, the law also required the co-operative board members attend basic accounting and business training to understand how to keep a rudimentary ledger.<sup>62</sup>

The principal point of conflict between the Agricultural Credit Bank and individuals or co-operative societies during the war was over the use of and payment for nitrogenous fertilizers. As stated above, because of the severe shortages, only a few companies like banks were licensed to transact large wholesale trades. They then resold to co-operatives, small merchants or directly to growers. The government assigned strict quotas of fertilizer per feddan for each crop, favoring food crops, like wheat and barley (usually 30-50 kg per feddan), and sugar cane (200 kg per feddan), for political reasons.<sup>63</sup> No fertilizer was allocated for cotton after 1940. Peasants would receive their share of fertilizer on credit and then resell it at a high price to black market merchants, sometimes waiting a literal stone's throw from the bank premises to make these transactions.<sup>64</sup> Merchants resold fertilizer from Lower Egypt, where there was more active propaganda

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<sup>62</sup> 'Abd al-Latif Amer, "Agricultural and Co-operative Credit in Egypt", *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, March 1948. See also Ministry of Social Affairs, *Social Welfare in Egypt, 1950*, official report, pp. 41-59, attached to USNARA, RG 84, 874.4, memo 2 Dec. 1950.

<sup>63</sup> Lamer, *The World Fertilizer Economy*, 588.

<sup>64</sup> FO 922/66 MESC Memo Report on tour through Lower Egypt by P.S. Palmer. 24-27 Jan. 1943.



to make organic fertilizer and soil fertility was generally higher, to the voracious cane growers in Upper Egypt.<sup>65</sup> Peasants also frequently lied to the banks, declaring they would plant larger areas of grain than they actually did to obtain more fertilizer for other crops. Even if they used it all themselves, irregular yields on the grain crops meant they could lose out in the long run if they had to buy grain on the black market to remit the government's share of their inflated grain estimates. It is likely much of this black-market fertilizer went to cotton to compensate for area restrictions on sowing the crop; statistics subsequently showed yields on cotton continued to rise during the war even while grain yields fell precipitously.<sup>66</sup>

Despite the difficulties the government faced in controlling the black market in fertilizer, with their semi-monopoly on a reliable and legal supply chain in remote rural areas, the number of villages with co-operatives exploded from 1942-1945, increasing from 862 co-ops with 124,000 members and LE 338,000 in capital to 2,018 co-ops with 782,000 members and LE 1.3 million in capital.<sup>67</sup> A few detailed files about specific agricultural cooperatives founded in this period survive in the Egyptian archives, and they provide a fascinating view of the financial and social structure of rural Egypt in this period. Middling peasants had very few options for investment and saving beyond struggling to acquire more highly-priced land. The cooperatives gave them a way to invest in incremental shares in an enterprise that would both lower the costs of their crops and potentially bring a small income. Thirty-five residents of Kafr Abu Farag, Markaz

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<sup>65</sup> See Amīn Aḥmad 'Anbar Al-Barr, *Al-Asmada Al-'Uḍiwiya* (Cairo: Matabat al-Anglū al-Misriya, 1943), official Ministry of Agriculture literature on the latest advice in organic fertilizer chemistry and social propagation.

<sup>66</sup> Lamer, *The World Fertilizer Economy*, 588.

<sup>67</sup> USNARA, RG 84, 874.4, Appended Ministry of Social Affairs publication, "Social Welfare in Egypt" 2 Dec. 1950, 43.

Hihya in Al-Sharqiya founded a cooperative on October 9, 1943, in which each purchased between one to 18 shares for 50 piasters per share, for a total capitalization of LE 101.50 in 203 shares.<sup>68</sup> The ledgers also note that the members owned a total of 102 feddans. Although the officers of the cooperative were all men owning 10 shares or more, women members owned 84 shares in addition to their 34 feddans. Based on their names, it appears half of the members of the cooperative belonged to a single extended family, the descendants of Mahmoud Raslan. Balance sheets from the 1940s indicate that the group's capital was used to maintain a line of credit with the Credit Agricole Bank that allowed it to obtain seed, an adequate amount of fertilizer, consumer goods like fabric, and even some new motorized pumps. It also produced an average LE 7 annual profit that the co-op used to build its capital and that it distributed to shareholders. An inspector from the Ministry of Social Affairs traveled to Markaz Hihya once a year to attend the annual meeting and make his pencil report for the file.

#### SKYROCKETING LAND RENTS: FAILING THE LOWER CLASS

If the bureaucrats of the Ministry of Social Affairs were moderately successful helping the class of small peasants who had even a little disposable capital to better their lot by establishing cooperatives, they had far less success in helping the growing class of landless tenants. These peasants found themselves trapped between fixed legal prices for their produce, soaring but illegal black market demand, and the audacious demands from landlords for rent increases that reflected these inflated prices. While Egypt's large landowners could tolerate restrictions on the sowing areas and prices of their own crops

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<sup>68</sup> DWQ 4029-000185 Files of the Cooperatives of Al-Sharqiya. A clipping from the announcement in the Official Gazette is from 18 Oct. 1943. Other documents include annual reports in pencil until 1949.

through the manipulations stated above, they looked far less kindly on legislation that limited in any way their customary economic liberties and the lordly social position they held above their tenants and laborers. In conditions of extreme scarcity, the government decided to subsidize grain prices, but there was no political will to enforce any form of rent control. A system of agricultural tenure typically without formal contracts led owners immediately to reap the benefits of those high prices. Tenants, meanwhile, were pushed to the brink of disaster on a season-by-season basis.

As with many of the social problems caused by the war, the government only became aware of the extortionate rents landowners were charging by 1942, when the Ministries of Supply, Agriculture and Social Affairs began receiving tenant petitions that rents had already more than doubled in some cases from 1939 levels.<sup>69</sup> These petitions also reveal how well-informed peasant renters were about political and economic conditions resulting from the war remote from their villages. Mikha'il Zaki, a local waqf administrator from Mit Ghamr writing on behalf of local residents, petitioned the prime minister in early 1943 to institute a new law restricting land rents similar to the law recently passed restricting increases on rents for apartments in urban areas.<sup>70</sup> Short of a

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<sup>69</sup> See DWQ 4029-000597 and 4029-000598 for reports and memoranda from Ministry of Social Affairs employees Abdel Fattah Zayat, Riad Ghonemy and Ahmed Hussein, and compilations of tenant petitions. Petitions received 14 Sep. 1942 from Shibin Al-Kum, Al-Menoufiyya governorate allege rents increased from LE 12 to LE 30 to 35. Because the Ministry of Supply had more intensive contact with agricultural producers, it often forwarded rent-related petitions to Social Affairs from peasants who claimed they could not deliver the full amount of wheat or rice his ministry was requesting, DWQ 4029-000597, Hamza to 'Abdel Haq, 10 Apr. 1943.

<sup>70</sup> DWQ 4029-000597, Mikha'il Zaki to Prime Minister Mustafa Al-Nahhas, 10 Feb, 1943. Zaki is referring to Military Proclamation 315 restricting urban rents, which became controversial among urban landowners.

new law, he implores the government to help set up reconciliation committees between owners and renters, “the way the government did when the cotton price fell in 1920.”<sup>71</sup>

Another petition from tenants on the Sheikh Fadel Land Company in Al-Minya governorate sparked a very detailed investigation by the Ministry of Social Affairs. The Fadel company was a large sugar cane plantation that charged its tenants rent in kind, but had refused to reduce its claimed share of 450 qintars of cane per feddan when yields fell from 700 to 400 qintars. ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Zayat, an official from the Peasant department, traveled to Al-Minya and prepared a sociological and historical report explaining that mismanagement of the irrigation on the land was principally to fault for the falling off of yields, in addition to the irregular application of fertilizer. He argued the peasants of the Sheikh Fadel plantation required a one-time rent reduction to 200 qintars in order to maintain their meager standard of living, and drafted a military proclamation to this effect.<sup>72</sup> However, the owners of Sheikh Fadel were extremely well connected — the company was chaired by ex-minister Tawfiq Duss Pasha — and the government took no further action on this report.<sup>73</sup> Only after the malaria epidemic in Upper Egypt become evident did Al-Nahas push a special land tax in Qena and Aswan governorates through parliament to help fund relief efforts in those areas, and not without complaint and controversy.<sup>74</sup>

Because the state had never registered or surveyed ownership deeds or rental contracts, it had no reliable up-to-date statistical information about increases in rent.

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<sup>71</sup> The government also intervened to grant amnesty on rents during the crisis at the beginning of the Great Depression. Decree Laws 110 of 1931 and 55 of 1932 delayed 30% of the rent due owners for the 1931-1932 growing season, and Decree Law 83 of 1933 allowed renters never to pay that share of the rent.

<sup>72</sup> DWQ 4029-000597, Report on the conditions of tenants at Sheikh Fadel Land Company, Al Minya, by ‘Abd al-Fattah al-Zayat, 22 April 1944.

<sup>73</sup> The Stock Exchange Year-Book of Egypt, ed. Clement Levy, 1943, 308-311. The Sheikh Fadel Land Company’s profits had increased every year from 1939 to 1942.

<sup>74</sup> Gallagher, *Egypt’s Other Wars*, 56-58.

Workers at the Ministry of Social Affairs began trying to collect this data starting in 1943.<sup>75</sup> The ministry discovered that the problem for renters was not only that landowners were charging higher rents, but that the landowners ignored their tenants' increased input costs, which had also doubled in the case of sowing seed and fertilizer.<sup>76</sup> Ministry officials also discovered that some tenants were also making large profits from the progressively increased food crop prices if they could keep their costs under control, while some middling landlords who had tenants with long-term contracts had the temerity to petition to allow their rent to be renegotiated upward to capture some of the upside of war profits. For owners of land suited for growing grain, the program of government requisition of grains at a fixed price generally disrupted liberal area systems of sharecropping. New statistical surveys allowed the ministry by the end of the 1940s to determine that owners of many *'izab* (plantations) who had hired laborers or employed sharecroppers prior to the war began instead leasing much more of their land for cash rents. Ministry employee Ghonemy observed the proportion of cultivated land rented for cash soared from 17% to 60% of all in the course of the 1940s.<sup>77</sup> This revolution in tenure had a hugely destabilizing effect on rural society.

As cash rents skyrocketed in 1942 and 1943, the concept of a "land crisis" evolved in public discourse into its most acute form, revitalizing a social movement for the welfare of rural tenants and workers that had been developing in the 10 years since

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<sup>75</sup> DWQ 4029-000597, Peasant Department, Ministry of Social Affairs to Minister of Awqaf and State Land, 22 March 1943. The department received no statistics from these authorities two months after asking for them.

<sup>76</sup> DWQ 4029-000597, Salah Labib of the Statistics Department to the Fellah Department, Ministry of Social Affairs, 17 April 1943.

<sup>77</sup> Alan Richards, *Egypt's Agricultural Development, 1800-1980: Technical and Social Change* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1982), 172-174; Mohamed Riad Ghonemy, "Resource Use and Income in Egyptian Agriculture Before and After the Land Reform With Particular Reference to Economic Development," (Ph.D., University of North Carolina, 1953), 46-47. Neither of these authors draw a direct connection of these developments to the government grain monopoly and collection policies.

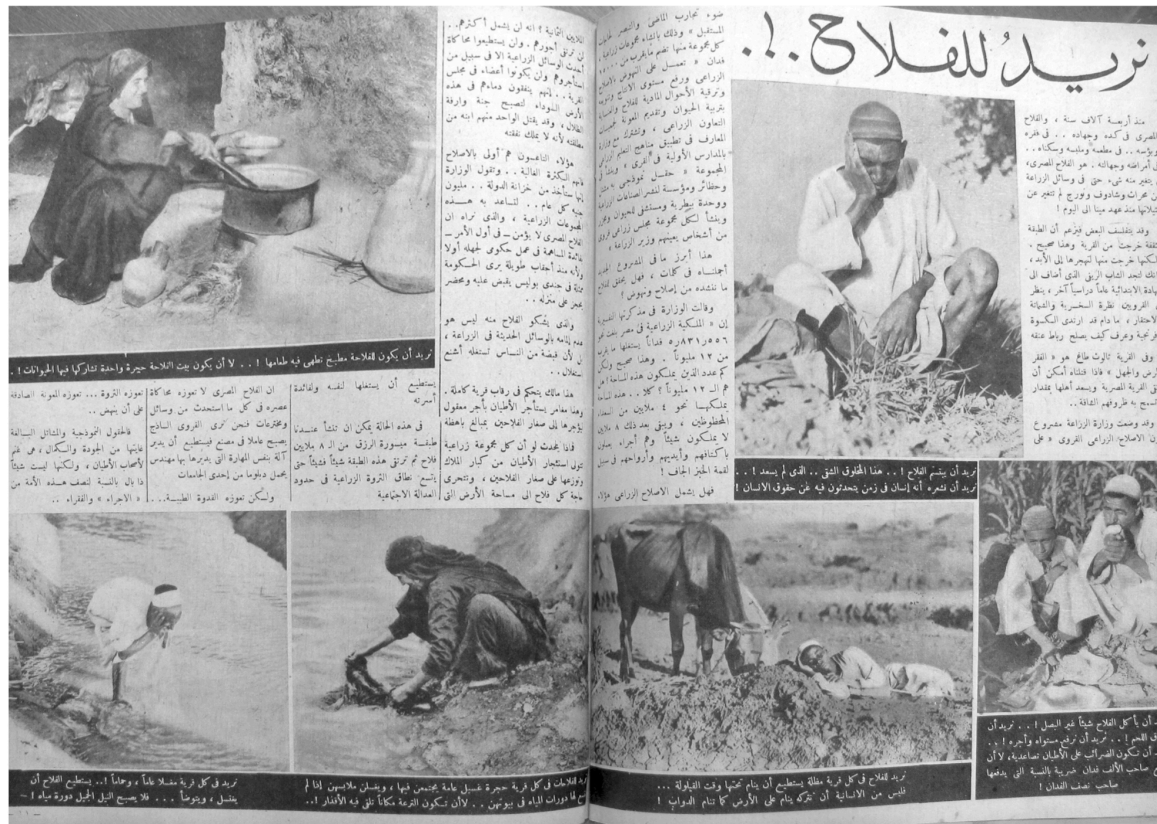


Figure 4.3. "[What] We Want for the Peasant!" Al-Ithnayn's acknowledged the huge inequality in land ownership in Egypt, but its proposed solutions to rural poverty were restricted to programs to educate peasants in scientific sowing methods and hygiene, rather than progressive taxation or rent controls. Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya, October 4, 1943.

the start of the Depression. Controversy over the proper resolution to this problem lasted until the Free Officers restricted private land ownership to 200 feddans after their coup in 1952. Many academic agronomists and economists, and government technocrats, insisted improvements in land and labor productivity through mechanization and public health measures, reductions in the birth rate to reduce demands on land, and reforms to Islamic law to prevent the fragmentation of family landholdings could address the problem without radical changes to ownership laws. Commentary that touched directly on the issue of the relationship between renters and owners was generally conservative, advocating imposing written contracts with clauses for set rent increases and mandatory arbitration,<sup>78</sup> or reform to Waqf lands to increase the land market (see also Figure 4.3).<sup>79</sup>

<sup>78</sup> Mohamed Aly El Ghatit, "L'Agriculture En Egypte Et L'Après-Guerre," *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, No.

In a policy pamphlet from 1944 sponsored by the British Council, Minister of Agriculture Mustafa Nusrat went so far as to recommend laws restricting the amount of land wealthy owners could acquire each year, as well as much more radically progressive land taxes on large owners.<sup>80</sup>

Different solutions to the land crisis in proposed legislation provoked extensive political conflict even before the war was over. Leftist senator Muhammad Khattab sponsored a controversial bill reducing inequality in land ownership over time by preventing any person owning 50 feddans or more in land from acquiring more through purchase or inheritance.<sup>81</sup> By the time this bill reached the senate floor in 1945, prominent social reformist Mirrit Ghali had published *Agricultural Reform*, and reversed his prior stand on rural reform to make one of the first high-profile calls for real land redistribution from a member of the intellectual elite. With economist Rashid Barrawi, Ghali shortly founded the Society of National Renaissance, a group of young intellectuals who supported state management of the economy as a solution to income inequality and other social ills and who later became important members of the 1950s government.<sup>82</sup>

In contrast to the radical solution presented through restrictions on land ownership, starting in 1943, the Ministry of Social Affairs quietly prepared more modest reform proposals that would require written rent contracts, peg rent increases to soil

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216-217, Jan.-Feb. 1944, 72-73.

<sup>79</sup> M. Jungfleish, "Problèmes Ruraux: 'Propriétaire et locataire,'" *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, No. 214, Nov. 1943, 494-499.

<sup>80</sup> Mustafa Nusrat, "A Post-War Agricultural Policy in Egypt," *Post War Economic Policy Series, British Council and Anglo-Egyptian Union*, Feb. 1944.

<sup>81</sup> See Misako Ikeda, "Sociopolitical Debates in Late Parliamentary Egypt, 1944-1952," (Ph.D., Harvard University, 1998), 59-103, for a narrative of the fight over Muhammad Khattab's bill.

<sup>82</sup> Mirrit Ghālī, *Al-Iṣṭaḥ Al-Zirāʿī* (Cairo: Jamāʿat al-Naḥḍa al-Qawmiya, 1945). Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity* discusses the development of the Society of National Renaissance in detail.

fertility and average price of crops and safeguard against unlawful evictions.<sup>83</sup> *Al-Ahram* published a story on March 19, 1943 suggesting the Ministry of Social Affairs was considering developing legislation to protect tenants, which elicited another wave of petitions supporting this concept, many of which cited the article directly. Some of the most aggrieved petitions were from sub-letters of tenants of government land, the rent on which had not been re-assessed and increased since the 1937 land survey.<sup>84</sup> The council of ministers approved the final draft of this law, which restricted rental contracts for the 1944-1945 growing year to no more than 110% more than 1940 rents, 90% more than 1941 rents, or 33.3% more than 1942 rents, for submission to parliament on May 31, 1944.<sup>85</sup> As both bills were under consideration, the ministry's peasant department director Ahmad Husayn had the opportunity to speak against Khattab's bill while supporting his own in a Parliamentary Special Committee for Social Affairs and Labor. Suitably enough, Khattab's bill was passed through the committee only to be voted down on the senate floor, as no senator wanted to be on the record in opposition to a bill that had gained such populist support, while the Ministry's moderate bill, which probably had a better chance of success overall but had less public notice, died in the committee.<sup>86</sup>

As with the difficult controls over chaotic boundaries between British military and Egyptian civilian space, varying coercive measures taken to obtain grain were also made in the name of state security. The war witnessed the increase of government intervention into the agricultural economy, but because of the institutional inertia and the material interests of political parties, increased bureaucratic knowledge did not translate

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<sup>83</sup> FO 922/33 July 1944 report of the Middle East Economic Bureau, Egypt section. 14 July 1944.

<sup>84</sup> DWQ 4029-000597, anon. petition to Ministry of Social Affairs, 22 Mar. 1943.

<sup>85</sup> The full draft of the bill is in DWQ 0081-077905, memorandum from the Minister of Agriculture to the Council of Ministers, 29 May, 1944.

<sup>86</sup> Ikeda, "Sociopolitical Debates in Late Parliamentary Egypt", 69-77.



smoothly to new policies to control social and economic developments. Even with the power to unilaterally pass rent restrictions as military proclamations, Al-Nahhas evidently did not feel he could survive the political backlash that would result from implementing such a policy.

## THE BLACK MARKET AND THE POLITICS OF CONSUMPTION

Despite the fact that smallholders and landless tenants and laborers lost ground in the struggles over agricultural wealth during the war, the Wafd policies did ultimately guarantee enough production of the raw foodstuffs it had decided the government should control directly to prevent a famine across urban and rural areas. The concept of a “supply crisis” in the Egyptian media came to mean problems with the distribution and retail end of the economic cycle. Although Egypt did not experience war austerity on the level of Great Britain, the extreme disparity between British military spending and goods available in Egypt meant black markets existed everywhere for nearly all goods. I will focus here on the supply politics of three staple commodities produced in Egypt itself: bread, sugar and fabric. The media closely followed the availability of these three consumer goods that defined personal identity and social class in intimate ways.

The study of mass consumption as a window into economic and social history is a recent innovation in Egyptian historiography of the colonial era. Relli Shechter and Nancy Reynolds have productively demonstrated how successive generations of Egyptian urbanites defined themselves through their styles of consuming tobacco and clothing, respectively.<sup>87</sup> In particular they reveal the binary identities that the urban middle classes

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<sup>87</sup> See Relli Shechter, *Smoking, Culture and Economy in the Middle East the Egyptian Tobacco Market 1850-2000* (London ; New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006); Nancy Young Reynolds, *A City Consumed: Urban*

struggled to reconcile through their modes of consumption in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century: between Western styles that carried the positive values of modernity and elitism, and neo-traditional styles that emblemized authenticity and national autonomy, consumers frequently create hybridized styles of consumption. Studies of mass consumption in First and Second World War-era Europe have greatly broadened the social history of states and people on the home front, demonstrating that the evolution of a community's provision of basic goods to all had as wide ranging effects on consumption habits after the end of austerity regimes as did an individual's choice on a free market.<sup>88</sup> Determining what constituted the "basic needs" of the average Egyptian, considering broad regional differences and a countryside still partially subsisting on self-grown produce, was a preeminently political process. The Middle East Supply Center agronomists, some of whom were veterans of the British Ministry of Food who had carefully calculated the calories and vitamins that each share of rations in Britain carried, were restricted by the statistics available in Egypt and by their limited jurisdiction to offering vaguer assessments of feasible rather than optimum reductions.<sup>89</sup> While popular demands, mediated through Egyptian publications, forced the government to act to provide subsidized food and goods, the government in turn sought to use a public discourse of security to transform the opinions and consumption habits of Egypt.

The Egyptian government was reluctant to enforce reductions in cotton acreage or to stop raising the government price of grain crops to encourage large and small

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*Commerce, the Cairo Fire, and the Politics of Decolonization in Egypt* (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 2012).

<sup>88</sup> See Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain*; Tyler Stovall, "The Consumers' War: Paris, 1914-1918," *French Historical Studies* 31:2 (2008); Kenneth Mouré, "Food Rationing and the Black Market in France (1940-1944)," *French History* 24:2 (2010).

<sup>89</sup> James Vernon, *Hunger: A Modern History* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2007): see in particular Chapter 5, "Hungry England and Planning for a World of Plenty," 118-158, for a critical history of the Ministry of Food.

landowners alike to grow wheat. At the same time, it refused to ration bread to avoid urban unrest: shortages of flour had caused mass closure of bakeries in May 1941 and public demonstrations demanding bread, and the government feared a relapse of such protests in 1942.<sup>90</sup> Even the semi-official magazine *The Ministry of Social Affairs* said the crisis revealed the “weakness of social solidarity and the victory of a vile egoism... that the government must intervene to stop.”<sup>91</sup>

The principal technocratic response to uneven grain harvests was therefore to experiment with mixing wheat, corn, rice and barley flour at different levels of germ extraction to try to produce loaves with the texture, smell and color best approximating pure wheat white flour loaves. This subjective issue of consumption fashions recurred in governmental meetings during 1942. Since the urbanization and adoption of European culture by the upper class in the early 20th century, this class had begun to consume white bread made with refined wheat flour. Meanwhile, the peasants baked a cheaper *baladi* (country) loaf from home-ground maize cornmeal. Tawfik al-Hakim recalled in his autobiographical novel *The Return of The Season* how upset his mother would become if the servants on the family’s farm had not laid in a supply of white bread when they visited: “She shouted at him, ‘Don’t disgust me... Do I eat bread like that? Go and send one of the peasants at once to bring me French bread from Damanhour.’”<sup>92</sup> That the Minister of Interior could spend an hour discussing whether 1/3 yellow corn or 1/3 white corn mixture with wheat produced the most pleasant tasting loaf indicates how smoothly

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<sup>90</sup> Among the near daily coverage on wheat stocks: “The Problem of Wheat and Flour Demand Attention: Monopolists are to Blame,” *Al-Muqattam*, 26 May 1941; “Supply affairs: Wheat and Flour,” *Al-Ahram*, 5-7 Jan. 1942; “Yellow Gold: Harvesting the Wheat,” *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, May 18, 1942; and “The New Wheat Crop Arrives,” *Al-Ahram*, 6 June 1942.

<sup>91</sup> “The Problem of Supply: Distributing Flour is the Power of Social Solidarity,” *Ministry of Social Affairs Magazine*, February 1942.

<sup>92</sup> Tawfiq Al-Hakim, *Return of the Spirit*, Trans. William M. Hutchins (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1990), 164.

the problems of consumption and state security had become blended. This committee even considered creating a two-tiered system that allowed for whiter, more expensive bread for upper-class areas, before abandoning the whole scheme as too complex and potentially embarrassing to the Wafd's populist image.<sup>93</sup>

After the government bought up as much maize corn as it could in the summer of 1942 to mix with wheat for the cities, the late-summer maize harvest was also far below average, threatening the peasants' supply of their main subsistence food. As a result, the Ministry of Supply instructed banks to leave more wheat in the countryside than was customary for that year for peasant consumption. The peasant loaf therefore actually became closer to white bread.<sup>94</sup> Intense news coverage of supply problems also established "the loaf" of bread, now unified in size, weight, and texture across urban and rural areas, as a unified national symbol of public security and stability. According to the Minister of Supply in 1943, his number one priority was to "get the loaf to the Egyptian people," establishing it practically as a civil right of all urban and rural Egyptian subjects to purchase for five millemes (one half piaster).<sup>95</sup> As a result, peasants began consuming far more wheat than had been their custom. This precedent required government intervention in the economy long after the war in the name of food security. It contributed to the foundation of permanent state-controlled barter agreements between Egypt, Britain and the United States.

In contrast to wheat, the worldwide scarcity and relative luxury of sugar meant that it was the only staple good, in addition to kerosene, that the government rationed.

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<sup>93</sup> See DWQ 0081-026611, Government Committee on Bread Supply, 3 Oct. 1941; FO 922-65, MESC internal memorandum, R.F. Kahn, 17 April 1942.

<sup>94</sup> FO 922/65, MESC memo, "Summary of Cereals Situation in Cairo," RGA Jackson, 22 July, 1942. Jackson noted, "The fellah is the main sufferer and although he can live on wheat, it costs him more."

<sup>95</sup> "Ministry of Supply: The Minister's Speech on its Mission," Al-Ahram, 24 Sep. 1943.

The monopoly of Ahmad ‘Abbud’s Sugar Company meant that it was relatively easy for sugar wholesalers to manipulate the market, by secretly selling sugar to retailers in advance of the mandated schedule for prices in excess of the fixed official price.<sup>96</sup> As retailers in return sold illegal shares of sugar in advance, rural areas and smaller cities regularly experienced shortages of sugar. The military governor passed proclamations repeatedly to stem the advance sales of sugar, but by 1943, the official policy had switched to increasing the official share of sugar to break the black market.<sup>97</sup> ‘Abbud was able to provide the Ministry of Supply with these extra amounts, when they were available. His brinksmanship negotiations with the British over bulk trade of sugar for fertilizers frequently collapsed, while increases in the official domestic price of sugar became competitive with the British offers. Ministry officials also discovered that sugar was important as a so-called “inducement good,” along with tea (the peasant’s main medium of sugar consumption) and tobacco, for getting the peasantry to bring their government share of wheat to the grain banks to obtain cash.<sup>98</sup> In this sense, increasing the reach of the market economy for consumer goods in the countryside was the Ministry of Social Affairs’ ulterior motive for increasing the number of local cooperatives.<sup>99</sup> The ministry also sought to use its (minimal) supervision over the cooperatives as a way to reduce the black market in rural areas. As a result of the relatively plentiful supply, the consumption of domestically produced sugar in the country increased from an average of 123,000 tons in the years before the war to 180,000 tons in 1943, and towards more than

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<sup>96</sup> “Ameliorating the Sugar Crisis,” *Al-Ahram*, 4 June 1942.

<sup>97</sup> FO 922/33, Middle East Supply Center Economic Bulletin, May 1944, 3.

<sup>98</sup> Lloyd, *Food and Inflation*, 278.

<sup>99</sup> FO 922/94 Ministry of War Transport report, “The Cooperative Movement in Egypt,” by the Foreign Research and Press Service, Balliol College, Oxford, 24 Dec. 1943.

200,000 after the war.<sup>100</sup> As with fabric, however, the increase in consumption was not shared evenly across the country, and working class and rural consumers complained about shortages.

A crisis over the shortage of cheap fabric entered public discourse later in the war, as the clothing of the poor wore out beyond repair. As customary, the major magazines finally took notice when large lines of women began forming in cities to buy scarce coarse cloth in early 1944.<sup>101</sup> Unlike wheat, which the Allied armies actively forswore, and sugar, which the British were unable to acquire, the textile economy in Egypt was not so easily cured through a domestic monopoly or import substitution. Egypt customarily exported its finest grade cotton to European mills and imported poorer quality cotton and finished piece goods from India for local consumption. Egyptian factories more than doubled their output from 83 to 210 million square yards from 1939 to 1944, as high quality long-staple Egyptian cotton textiles were incredibly useful for military purposes ranging from uniforms to supply drop parachutes. Despite the increase in output, goods made from this grade of cotton were generally too expensive for lower-class Egyptians to buy. The issue was politicized when lack of cloth for new clothing and blankets in Upper Egypt threatened to encourage the spread of malaria during the chilly weather in the winter of 1944. King Faruq, restless after two years of a hostile Wafd government, sought to score political points by claiming that the Wafd had allowed the British to buy food and cloth needed by the peasants. Wafd officials countered that peasants were not paid well enough on the King's own Upper-Egyptian land to afford new clothing.<sup>102</sup> A new scandal arose when the public learned that the Ministry of Supply expressly directed

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<sup>100</sup> Lloyd, *Food and Inflation*, 361.

<sup>101</sup> "The People's Cloth: How Are They Obtaining It?" *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, 16 April, 1944.

<sup>102</sup> Gallagher, *Egypt's Other Wars*, 58.

supply officials to ration coarse cloth in proportion to the social class of the purchaser: in this case, reserving 7.5 yards per person per years for urban areas and sending only 2.5 yards to rural areas, which many did not receive at all because of poor distribution. The government pledged subsidized yarn to the larger factories, which reserved a portion of their productive power to making cheaper goods, and the wide range of smaller manufacturers around the country who could produce “popular” cloth at a low overhead to satisfy the demand from the lower classes.<sup>103</sup>

Weaknesses in the Ministry of Supply administration, and the relative concentration of the power of the importers and wholesalers, was politically ensured. The coercive power of state security was therefore the final resort, not just in maintaining retail supply, but in demonstrating to the public that the state was serious about enforcing justice in supply matters. In comparison to the military courts’ relatively lenient attitude towards enforcing violations of agricultural war legislation, coercive action against urban retail black marketeers was much harsher, and the military courts more consistently executed the letter of the law.

The military governor painstakingly legislated punishments for the various ways a baker could defraud his customer, from incorrectly extracting bran or mixing in other impurities, to making loaves smaller, lighter or wetter than the new standards for the fixed loaf. Although fines scaled downward to 50 to 100 piasters for small operators caught reselling bread at a markup, corrupt bakers faced up to LE 50 fines. Retailers of sugar and kerosene were subject to LE three to six fines for not maintaining a ledger to

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<sup>103</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Supply, *Annual Report 1944-45*, (Cairo: Al-Matba‘a Al-Amiriya, 1945), 35-50. The MESC identified the risk that handweavers were selling their subsidized yarn at a profit to the larger factories. FO 922/372, MESC report: “Revue of the present cloth supply position by a mill manager in Alexandria,” Oct. 1944.

remit to the Ministry of Supply of their customers' purchases as allotted to their families' ration cards.

Punishments for selling consumer goods in excess of the fixed price were the harshest of all. Besides fines of up to LE 100, price gougers received typically from three months up to a year in prison, the closure of their shops for more than a week, and mandatory local newspaper ads announcing their conviction. A raid on a Port Said fabric shop run by Ibrahim Muhammad Al-Sayerfi, age 30, illustrates the sophistication with which some retailers evaded price controls and surveillance. Responding to a complaint, an undercover supply officer entered Al-Sayerfi's shop on the evening of September 25, 1943 and asked to purchase some of the rationed varieties of cloth. Producing his ration card for Al-Sayerfi to mark down in his official ledger, Al-Sayerfi claimed he didn't have any of those varieties. When the officer returned the next morning and asked again, Al-Sayerfi offered him the cloth, even more than the rationed amount, if he was willing to pay more than the fixed price to "a boy waiting behind the shop." He then produced a box with the ration cards of "many different names," presumably neighborhood accomplices, of which he registered a few randomly in his ledger. The boy returned with 15 pieces of the rationed cloth stored in an unknown location. Al-Sayerfi was convicted in military court and sentenced to six months in prison, a LE 100 fine and the two-week closure of his shop.<sup>104</sup>

For a brief period in 1942, Al-Nahas mandated corporal punishment by lashing for black market offenses. As an example, on November 28, 1942, the military court of Fayyum issued summary sentences to 25 black market traders of three months in prison

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<sup>104</sup> DWQ 0081-030638. Military Court appeals to Military Governor. Felony case 811/Port Said for 1944.



and 15 lashes of the whip.<sup>105</sup> It appears in the record that this sentence fell out of use relatively quickly, and judges resorted to high fines as a deterrent. In contrast to the relative frequency with which al-Nahas intervened to pardon farmers for hoarding, his bureaucracy pardoned less than 5% of consumer goods hoarding and price gouging cases in military trials during the last three months of 1942, which came to court at a rate of 75 per week in this period (see again Figure 2.3).<sup>106</sup>

It is evident from many of the cases that local Ministry of Interior officials were complicit in the maldistribution of goods, and many refused to cooperate with Ministry of Supply officials in improving the situation. Al-Nahas wrote an angry memorandum to the *mudirs* (regional governors) asking them to better monitor the *'umdas* and *shaykhs* (local administrators) under their authority in matters of supply:

We have learned that... some of the *'umdas* and *shaykhs*, who are the functional hand and sleepless eye of the government in the countryside, and responsible for executing its orders in the boundaries of justice and the law, are not deserving of the trust put in them. When this government put matters of supply at the top its priorities, it intended... that rich and poor alike should receive equal shares of food. So turn your attentions to this matter. I hope to learn you are exerting the greatest effort possible to directly monitor the supply affairs.<sup>107</sup>

Individual case reports also reveal the extent that corruption infected the Ministry of Supply administration, ranging from bribe taking from mid-range retailers, which netted one supply inspector seven years in prison and a LE 20 fine,<sup>108</sup> to the entrapment and extortion of retailers by ministry inspectors.<sup>109</sup> However, the government generally made

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<sup>105</sup> DWQ 0081-030436, Fayyum Military Court report to the Council of Ministers, 28 Nov. 1942.

<sup>106</sup> DWQ 0081-030436, Analysis of Egyptian Military Court case reports to the Military Governor: 3 Sep. 1942 to 31 Dec. 1942.

<sup>107</sup> DWQ 0081-026611 Memo from El-Nahas to the Mudirs, Ministry of Interior. March 3, 1943.

<sup>108</sup> DWQ 0081-030610 Military Felony 90 for 1944 Darb Al-Ahmar (Cairo). The defendant was Mahmoud Al Badrawi Effendi, judgment delivered 15 May 1944.

<sup>109</sup> For example, DWQ 0081-030437, military case 4933 for 1942, Tanta, The police accused Abdel Fattah Amin Ali Al Habib, who was denounced by neighborhood clients, of selling sugar at inflated prices. He



Figure 4.4. A vulgar villain: the war profiteer trope. (L) "[The government has decided to increase some taxes] Black market merchant — Thank God I don't report anything to the government!" *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, Feb. 14, 1944. (C) The local grocer of a working-class neighborhood in 1945 Studio Misr film *al-Suq al-Sawdā'* (The Black Market) buys a tuxedo and fancy car after bilking his customers. (R) "The doctor to the war profiteer: There's only one cure for what ails you: 'communism'!" *Al-Musawwar*, May 14, 1948.

a pointed effort in public announcements to direct dissatisfaction away from agricultural hoarders and corrupt bureaucrats, who in fact obtained the largest share of black market profits, towards the more visible greediness of neighborhood and retail merchants.<sup>110</sup> The major newspapers frequently published sensational reports of large amounts of goods confiscated and the stiff penalties to which hoarders were subject.

Indeed, the news media, literature and film most often depicted the “*ghani al-harb*” (war profiteer) as a lower-class trader who used his ill-gotten gains to transcend the trappings of his class and make absurd and vulgar consumption choices. A notable example includes the neighborhood grocer and baker from the 1945 Studio Misr film *al-Suq al-Sawdā'* (*The Black Market*), who use their new wealth and power to terrorize their local clients and to wear fancy clothes and perfume (see Figure 4.4). In a darkly humorous musical number, the baker pulls loaves out of his oven while singing cynical

countered that the police had planted the sugar at his shop when he was away and demanded money from him upon “discovering” the sugar. The court found him guilty.

<sup>110</sup> Sherene Seikaly, “Meatless Days: Consumption and Capitalism in Wartime Palestine 1939--1948,” (Ph.D., New York University, 2007), 340-342, examines the similar British-directed vilification of the individual profiteer instead of producers or wholesalers in mandate Palestine.



Figure 4.5. The military courts temporarily sentenced corporal punishment for black market offenses in 1942. "(It is known that many wealthy girls hoard consumer goods) — Enforcing the new law ... !! —" Ruz al Yusuf, 2 July 1942.

justifications for taking advantage of his customers and his assistants chant "we have seen nothing" in call and response.<sup>111</sup> The hero of the story delivers several rousing monologues about how the black marketeers are setting back the nationalist cause of Egypt by defrauding and even threatening the lives of the poor. However, the film demonstrates more obviously that most military trials for black marketing depended on denunciations from angry consumers. For the most part, local communities banded together to keep black markets secret out of fear of reprisals from merchants or fear of losing access to scarce goods. The *Egyptian Gazette* went so far as to shame the reader directly to get them to denounce black market traders: "Are YOU guilty of working hand-in-hand with the blackmarketeers: Have you ever paid an exorbitant price for something you wanted badly — and did nothing but curse? ... Get the Ministry of Supply on the phone or write them a letter giving full details."<sup>112</sup> The bombast of the paper's tone betrays the futility of its campaign.

<sup>111</sup> *Al-Suq al-Sawdā' (The Black Market)*, dir. Kamil al-Tilmisani, (Cairo: Studio Misr, 1945).

<sup>112</sup> "YOU are GUILTY," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 14 May 1943.

Newspapers and magazines were filled with advice and commentary that reflected the particularly gendered nature of anxiety over consumption and the black market. Articles frequently floated suspicion of women as difficult-to-detect capillaries in the black market, less scrupulous about resorting to the black market, and more desirous of frivolous consumption goods like fashion and luxury foods. A grocer interviewed in *Al-Ithneyn wal-Dunya* went so far as to accuse women taking up the habit of smoking as the cause of a match shortage.<sup>113</sup> Ruz Al-Yusuf epitomized these fears in a strangely kinky cartoon from June 1942, in which two police officers are depicted “reluctantly” whipping a young girl “of the upper class.” (Figure 4.5) It satirizes the new corporal punishments for traders convicted of hoarding or price gouging and the perception of the propensity of young women to be avaricious hoarders and consumers.<sup>114</sup> Generally, the state brought few women to court for black market activity, and the cartoon’s outlandishness reflects the general untouchability of the rich by the military court system.

As the end of the war approached, the state’s funding for the Ministry of Supply became more substantial, amounting to more than LE 2 million in the 1944-45 fiscal year. The ministry released its first annual report in early 1945, which provides evidence of its institutional maturation — and the development of a more sophisticated discourse about the relationship between the state and people with regards to supply. The report begins by acknowledging the legitimacy of the “complaints of the masses.”<sup>115</sup> It then meticulously addresses the alleged problems with the distribution of bread and cloth, most prominently, as well as oil, sugar, tea, kerosene, meat and other goods. In reparation perhaps for the cloth scandals, the repeated emphasis on the report is getting every

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<sup>113</sup> “Where are the cooking oil, tea and matches being hoarded?” *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, 1 Nov. 1943.

<sup>114</sup> *Ruz al-Yusuf*, 2 July 1942, 10.

<sup>115</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Supply, *Annual Report 1944-45*, (Cairo: Al-Matba‘a Al-Amiriya, 1945), 6-7.

Egyptian subject an equal share of these goods through increased subsidization, surveillance and distribution. While the pamphlet is undoubtedly a political tool of the Sa'adist party to point out the abuses of the Wafd, which had left office by this point, it reflects new techniques and attitudes towards supply administration. At the same time, these administrators were adopting socialistic language that attempted to cloak their ultimate aim of defending the private ownership of the means of production.

Regardless of their trenchant critique of bureaucratic incompetence, corruption and widespread acceptance of oligarchic capitalism, Egyptian leftists largely agreed with state managers about the role government should play in the regulation of the economy. Communist Ahmad Sadiq Sa'ad published *The Tragedy of Supply* in 1945, a long expose of the abuses at the Ministry of Supply and in big business that resulted in prolonged shortages of fabric, sugar and other necessities for the poor.<sup>116</sup> Rejecting easy allegations that Allied military consumption was the cause of shortages, he points to large-scale monopolies (especially owned by foreign capital) on goods that prevented them from reaching the cooperatives and other ration-priced outlets. His proposed solution is the partial requisition of the production of all sectors and industries on a progressive scale, subsidized resale by ration, and the nationalization of all other services and utilities that can't be subdivided this way. Although he does not spell it out explicitly, the only authority that could have further reordered this system and requisitioned these supplies, in light of conservative political elite opposition, was an even stronger military governor and state of siege. He does not address how the political system would prevent the attendant risks of corruption that result from such a concentration of state power.

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<sup>116</sup> Ṣadiq Sa'd, *Mā'sāt Al-Tamwīn: Naẓra Qawmīya 'Ilmīya Lil-Asbāb Mushkilat Al-Tamwīn* (Cairo: Dār al-Qarn al-'Ashrīn lil-Nashr, 1945).

## CONCLUSION

The world economic situation after the war forced the Egyptian government to remain involved in managing the food supply far longer than farmers, traders and politicians expected. Because of a LE 500 million pound sterling debt the British government owed to the National Bank of Egypt, the Egyptian economy was restricted for several years in its trade with other states in the British Empire or whose currencies were tied to the pound Sterling. These countries collectively had a net shortage of wheat and fertilizers compared to states that had dollars available to trade with the United States. For most of the 1940s, the state engaged in complex multi-party barter agreements between states in the sterling area and later with the United States to trade rice in bulk for the wheat it needed.<sup>117</sup> Domestic political interests also capitalized on and provoked the institutionalization of a nationalized food supply. Postwar Egyptian governments could no longer resist the strong opposition to restrictions on the cultivation of cotton. But rather than negotiating for a fair or even progressive distribution of cotton sowing rights, the government merely turned a blind eye to widespread violations of the restriction laws.<sup>118</sup> Because of the extent to which these half-enforced laws continued to interfere with optimal crop rotations, projected wheat crops continued to exceed the actual depressed harvests. All these factors in turn necessitated continued government intervention to arrange barter import agreements and to manage maize and millet stocks

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<sup>117</sup> DWQ 0081-026617 Harriet Friedmann, "The Political Economy of Food: The Rise and Fall of the Postwar International Food Order," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 88 (1982): S248-S286, argues US wheat surpluses resulting from New Deal subsidy policies underpinned US wheat aid diplomacy for the three decades after the war.

<sup>118</sup> NARA, RG 59, Egypt 861, American Embassy in Cairo internal memorandum, "Egyptian Food Situation - August 1946-July 1947," 30 Dec. 1946.

to mix into wheat flour. The government ended the state of siege in October 1945, while the national food supply was still tenuous, and so it extended the state's monopoly over trade in rice, wheat and flour by royal decree-legislation. At the same time, it increased the subsidies on wheat bread, increasing prices for producers and reducing the retail price.<sup>119</sup> Because the supply situation after 1945 was easier than during the war and fertilizer became incrementally more available, the state was able to make these populist maneuvers with little objection from farmers.

While the Egyptians and British both had begun the war believing that unrest among the urban masses posed the greatest threat to public security, the Egyptian bureaucracy recognized that managing import-substitution solutions to the variety of shortages across the country required more holistic strategies that brought rural producers into consideration as consumers themselves. Temporary labor migration to the British military workshops further blurred the lines between the urban and rural economy. The MESC played an important role in providing a new vocabulary and some surveillance techniques to this bureaucracy, but I argue the political problems unique to Egypt shaped the government's ultimate solutions to them. In this regard, many of the short-term security and subsidization policies were acceptable to the political elite, because this elite perceived the crisis in shortages as a temporary problem caused by the British monopoly over imports. However, the Egyptian government discovered after the war that this variety of economic management allowed it to avoid many of the more fraught questions of democratic rights or deeper welfare programs that it faced from a growing and urbanizing society.

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<sup>119</sup> "Improving Bread and Reducing its Price," *Al-Ahram*, 3 Oct. 1945, and NARA, RG 59, Egypt 861, internal memo, "Review of Egyptian Agriculture in 1945," Robert Elwood, n/d 1946.

## Chapter V

### An Unpaid Debt

#### British Manipulation of Egyptian Money, Labor and Fiscal Planning

Military metaphors for the mobilization of society spread in Egyptian discourse during the war. This trend did not result just from the material impact of the war on Egyptian life, or from the symbolic identification of the nationalist struggle for independence as a military struggle. In 1942, Iskandar Ṣalib Sulaymān employed military symbolism in describing the workers movement, in a way that straddled the metaphorical and functional:

This war has a great lesson to one who considers it. Free, independent Egypt needs to have a stronger army, but this army is not a military force... alone, for this present war is a war of reason, a war of invention, a war of brutal machines, and a war of productive industrial forces... In Egypt, one should not hesitate to call its industrial forces an army of workers in all their different professions. This is the army of the united nation — the industrial army of Egypt represents the sanctuary of hope known as nationalism. And yet... your working army remains a defeated army that doesn't have laws to protect it from the evils of unemployment or poverty or insurance against life's tragedies.<sup>1</sup>

Sulaymān's essay appeared in the newspaper *Shubra* during its brief career as the official newspaper of the General Union of Mechanized Textile Workers of Shubra al-Khayma and Cairo, one of the few unions that remained independent of the influence of the Wafd party during the war. It reflects workers' knowledge that they were not only

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<sup>1</sup> Iskandar Ṣalib Sulaymān, "The Present War is a War of Industry and Production: It is Not a War of Armor and Artillery," *Shubra*, 20 May 1942.



playing a crucial role in the current Allied war effort, but that industrial labor would continue to be central to the defense of Egypt in future wars as an independent, sovereign state. Although domestic Egyptian industry had received some stimulus during the downturn of the Great Depression, the Egyptian working class remained small and disconnected both in disparate industries and vocations and remote locations.

Starting in 1940, hundreds of thousands of new civilian workers began working in a wide variety of trades in the British military base camps and engineering workshops, as well as in the private industries that won large contracts with the military and also stepped up production to replace goods that had been imported before the war. These workshops and factories brought larger numbers of workers together in concentrated numbers for longer periods of time than ever before. Just as a broad segment of the middle class had initially identified Egyptian sovereignty with cooperation with the British in the war, the workers' movement saw the Wafd's ascent to power in 1942 as the occasion the Wafd would finally fulfill its promises of enacting legal protections for laborers. Sulaymān describes the relationship between workers and the government like that between "the body and the head," and that actions of reciprocal care and responsibility would benefit both. Despite the reservations of opposition parties and conservative business leaders, the Wafd delivered on these decade-long promises, passing laws recognizing the existence of trade unions and requiring large enterprises to hire workers on individual contracts and to insure them against injuries. As Beinín and Lockman have demonstrated, the Wafd engaged these maneuvers with broadened political patronage to the unions and attempted until 1944 to corporatize the labor

movement, for which it received some inspiration from British models of government-labor relations.<sup>2</sup>

There were deeper structural problems with the expansion of industrial employment, of the labor movement and of the Egyptian economy more broadly, that seriously threatened to undermine these gains. British military demand was underpinned by its unlimited supply of pounds Sterling to which the Egyptian pound was inflexibly pegged. As Britain's debt to Egypt approached £500 million, and its debt to India surpassed £1 billion, every country with currency pegged to the Sterling (the Empire and commonwealth) experienced severe inflation. But this was no ordinary wartime inflation. As members of the "Sterling area," these states resigned not just their monetary policy, but essentially also their ability to obtain other currencies for trade, to the British. This meant Egypt could not obtain desperately needed industrial supplies for many years after the end of the war.

Technocratic intervention on prices and wages under these conditions strained liberal Egyptian state administrators' abilities to reconceive the economy. In internal bureaucratic negotiations and conferences with the British to craft policies to reduce inflation and improve the government fiscal balance, problems like the sovereign debt, the value of the pound sterling, the level of new taxes and business privileges became nationalist issues. When postwar deflation failed to occur because of the new Keynesian footing of the global economy and the enduring Egyptian connection to the British sterling area, the Egyptian state extended its exceptional legal powers to retrench its interventions into the economy.

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<sup>2</sup> Beinin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 297-309.

## WORKING FOR THE BRITISH ARMY

All Egyptians experienced the threat of air raids and the privation of rationing and food shortages to a greater or lesser degree during the war, but the greatest impact the war had on particular Egyptians' lives was undoubtedly on the men (and a few women) who went to work for the British military. At the height of the war effort in 1942 and 1943, British authorities estimated fighting, engineering and logistical units employed around 150,000 Egyptian civilians, with another 100,000 employed in private work gangs and factories on military contracts.<sup>3</sup> At a time when employment in the manufacturing and construction trades barely totaled 500,000, this made the British military the second largest employer in Egypt behind the government itself. Employment with the military held out the promise of steady work for unskilled urban and farm laborers who had struggled to make ends meet since the start of the Great Depression. It also proposed two avenues of socioeconomic ascension — the first, to obtain vocational training as a skilled industrial worker, and the other, to enter business as a contractor of goods and services to the British military. A great deal of money was transferred to Egyptians lucky enough to get such good jobs during the five years of war, and it trickled down to all of the businesses that served these workers and Allied troops.

The Egyptian and British authorities eventually worried about the inflationary effect of this new money, and towards the end of the war, about the political dangers of unemployment resulting from the shutting down of the British workshops. A closer analysis of the Allied military economy in Egypt reveals that its transformation of Egyptian society did not only operate on the macroeconomic scale. Rather than merely

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<sup>3</sup> FO 922/174, MESC memorandum "Labour Survey of Egypt" July 1943, n/d. The unit diaries of the General Headquarters, Middle East Forces, Directorate of Pioneer and Labour for 1942-1943 (WO 169/3899 and WO 169/8393) corroborate these figures.

privileging one lucky group of 250,000 individuals, the extremely high turnover in employment meant far, far more people worked for the military for shorter periods during the war. The workers who did remain for many years in the military's employ were in the minority. Rather, the consistent experience for all workers was coming to terms with a new instability in their lives, whether it was migrating 1,000 miles from home to seek out work in dangerous areas, or being introduced to new forms of labor protest when surrounded by different employers competing for skilled workers by offering different wages.

A large-scale demographic movement occurred during the war, a rapid rural-to-urban migration particularly of laborers from Upper Egypt, south of Cairo. Between the 1937 and 1947 censuses, the overall population of Egypt increased from roughly 16 to 19 million, but the population of urban governorates Cairo, Alexandria, Damietta, Port Said and Suez increased 50%, 2.2 million to 3.4 million.<sup>4</sup> Despite plans at the end of the war to encourage rural-born Egyptians to return to their villages, the government did not have the ability to enforce this policy on hundreds of thousands of migrants. Egyptian literature reflected the instability of military employment, which exemplified the insecurity and quickening tempo of modernity in the cultural realm. Notably, in Naguib Mahfouz' *Midaq Alley*, two young friends obtain jobs in the British military workshops and both come to ruin because of it. The roguish Husayn Kirsha loses his job after stealing goods for black marketers. The hero 'Abbas succeeds for a longer period, only to be arrested after assaulting British soldiers on leave who are consorting with his fiancée Hamida, who became a prostitute in his absence.<sup>5</sup> Husayn Kirsha's experience was more

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<sup>4</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Finance, Census, 1947.

<sup>5</sup> Najīb Maḥfūz, *Midaq Alley*, Trans. Trevor Le Gassick (New York: Anchor Books, 1992).

common than that of 'Abbas', but neither their prior petty jobs as waiter and barber nor their prior worldviews limited to the impoverished and traditional Midaq Alley would satisfy either of them again.

For the first year of the war, the military's demand for extra workers was almost entirely for casual, unskilled labor to improve fortifications on the Western Desert front, which only became active after Italy declared war in 1940. During this time, no more than 10,000 Bedouin and upper Egyptians worked with three British companies in the Western Desert. The first full tally of unskilled labor in the Alexandria, Cairo and Canal zones showed a total of 20,000 further civilian workers in December 1940.<sup>6</sup> With the collapse of the Greek front, the withdrawal from Crete and the arrival of Rommel and the Germans in Libya in April 1941, labor recruitment both of military labor from Africa and India and among Egyptian civilians went into high gear. The British military's assessments of its manpower resources were pessimistic in 1941. The subjective nature of its needs reflected a racial hierarchy of skills and duties characteristic of the British Empire for a long time. Middle East Forces Assistant Deputy Adjutant General Col. JEC McCandlesh wrote,

The white manpower resources of the Empire are limited and less than those at the disposal of Germany. It is, therefore, necessary to plan the use of British manpower so as to obtain the utmost value from it. Troops from the following Colonies, Mandates, etc. are already serving in the MEF: Malta, Cyprus, Palestine, Transjordan, Sudan, Libya & Western Desert, Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika, Basutoland, Bechuanaland, Swaziland, Mauritius & Seychelles [and] Ceylon... Non-European troops [from the colonies] can be used in one or both of two capacities. As non-European units with British officers and NCOs, or as dilution within existing units... Some of these produce men of higher quality than others as soldiers, but in all cases it is necessary that British Service units and particularly all commanders, should do their utmost to make the best use of non-European troops now being raised."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> WO 169/36, Directorate of Pioneers and Labor, GHQ MEF, Diary, 13 Dec. 1940.

<sup>7</sup> WO 201/2339, Memorandum "Manpower - MEF," ADAG Col. JEC McCandlesh, 23 May 1942.

Among the non-white imperial subjects who fought with the white British, Free French, Polish, Yugoslavians and Greeks, the Indian army had the most experience fighting under British commanders and took pride of place. To allow these men to take leadership and frontline fighting roles, new African and Arab recruits would more likely end up in Royal Pioneer companies, which performed engineering, logistical, guard or other service duties. As standing units recruited from distant areas, stationed in camps and fed rations, pioneer companies were more costly to use than casual Egyptian labor, but were also better trained, more reliable, and completely versatile to the needs of the British commanders.<sup>8</sup> In the crucial period before Egypt's war neutrality had been firmly settled, the British Army attempted to recruit Egyptians directly into Pioneer units under British command rather than employing them as civilians.<sup>9</sup> The bitter memory of Egyptians having been abused and killed in regiments abroad during the First World War made it politically important to prevent this from happening again. As a part of the successive prime ministers' policies of "shielding Egypt from the horrors of war," which included keeping the Egyptian army inactive, and to keep jurisdictional claims straightforward, they did not allow Egyptians to enlist in the British army. The British army gave up on this direct recruitment effort by April 1941.<sup>10</sup>

The Wafd government went even further to maintain the state's control over Egyptian civilians by barring them from working as war contractors outside of the

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<sup>8</sup> See David Killingray, "'If I Fight for Them, Maybe Then I Can Go Back to the Village': African Soldiers in the Mediterranean and European Campaigns, 1939-1945," in *Time to Kill: The Soldier's Experience of War in the West, 1939-1945*, eds. Paul Addison and Angus Calder (London: Pimlico, 1997), Ashley Jackson, "Supplying War: The High Commission Territories' Military-Logistical Contribution in the Second World War," *The Journal of Military History* 66:3 (2002).

<sup>9</sup> WO 169/36, Directorate of Pioneers and Labor, GHQ MEF, Diary, 21 Sep. 1940.

<sup>10</sup> WO 169/979, Directorate of Pioneers and Labor, GHQ MEF, to Brigadier ALI Friend, 22 April 1941: "Egyptian Army Labour Companies are dead."

borders of Egypt. A 1942 request from a quartermaster in Transjordan requesting 400 Sa'idi laborers to work on a construction project in Aqaba, eventually involved the British Ambassador and Prime Minister Al-Nahhas (*al-Sa'id* is the Arabic name for Upper Egypt), Al-Nahhas firmly intervened: "As you are no doubt aware, the definite policy of my Government is not to send Egyptian subjects outside Egypt, whether they be labourers or clerks."<sup>11</sup> This exchange coincided with the highest demand for labor in Egypt, so it is natural al-Nahhas did not want to deprive his business allies of Egyptians to work in their expanding factories and other enterprises. As a result, the majority of the colonial Pioneer companies in the Middle East area ended up serving outside Egypt in areas with relatively scarcer labor, with 53 companies in Libya and 40 in Iraq and Iran, but only 30,000 pioneers in 16 companies in Egypt, by the end of 1943.<sup>12</sup>

Although the Adjutant General and Director of Pioneers and Labor at GHQ Middle East Forces and British Troops in Egypt maintained estimates of upcoming labor requirements and overall budget allowances, recruitment of labor across the country was to a great extent decentralized. Depending on their location, brigades, battalions and companies had Pioneer and Labor Control Officers whose task it was to recruit, supervise and pay laborers, and billet them in camps if they were too far from their homes to commute. To achieve these goals, PLCOs were instructed: "In towns, P.L.C.O. should keep in touch with the local Police and Labor bureaus. In villages, with Headmen or Omdas (mayors) or any reputable source of supply of labour."<sup>13</sup> Casual labor frequently had a social character, whereby men from the same village would be recruited and work

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<sup>11</sup> DWQ 0069-007383, Al-Nahhas to Lampson, 30 April 1942.

<sup>12</sup> WO 169/8393 Directorate of Pioneers and Labor, GHQ MEF, pioneer companies order of battle, 1 Nov. 1943.

<sup>13</sup> WO 169/979, memorandum "Instructions for Pioneer and Labor Control Officers," Maj. CN Ades, Deputy Asst. Director of P&L, 10 Apr. 1941.

in groups under the authority of headmen (*ra'is*, *pl. Ru'asa'*), who would take extra wages and sometimes a cut of his workers' pay. British NCO Arnold Lewis recounted the dynamics of these work gangs when working at the Royal Army Service Corps in Helwan, south of Cairo:

These gangs were often from a village in the area and the *rais* was the village headman... If one of the gang was back-sliding and failing to work, or thieving, a complaint to the *rais* resulted in the offender being given several blows with the staff or whip. They used to take it, too, with little protest. In general, a fairly satisfactory relationship developed between our men and the labourers. Next in importance to the *rais*, there was always one individual who led the gang by singing working songs or chants when there was a lengthy or tiring job, or a job which had to be done without delay, such as unloading a few lorry loads of commodities and stacking the sacks or cases. The labourers worked much better to a rhythm set by the singer and they joined in what might be a chorus. [He transcribes one as "Solly y Nebby, Solly," roughly "Pray for the Prophet, Pray"]<sup>14</sup>

Because of the persistence in basin irrigation in Upper Egypt, this was the last area in Egypt without perennial agriculture, and as a result, agricultural laborers were both more generally available for employment in the off season, and they accepted lower wages. However, control of migrant laborers became more difficult the farther the recruits had to travel from their villages. The Pioneer and Labor directorates recorded a constant stream of unskilled laborers being recruited and abandoning their posts. One of the more detailed accounts from December 1942 reveals how local labor was by nature more pliant than "imported" labor:

Serious strike at SIDI BARAKAT labour camp. 300 Saidis deserted and congregated at Amiriya. Complaints are that the Bash Raises have been extracting inordinate amounts of "blood money" [i.e., service payments] and that they have received harsh treatment at the hands of employing units. Several hundreds Alexandrians left the camp and went to neighbouring villages. The PLCO LT GFE Harris contacted the men and raises, and, after talking to them, the majority of them started to return to camp. The 300 Saidis who had gone to Amiriya would

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<sup>14</sup> Imperial War Museum Archive, personal papers of A. Lewis.



not however, under any circumstances return. Arrangements were therefore made for them to be sent to MATRUH...<sup>15</sup>

The Alexandria military docks confronted a similar problem in August 1943 of contract monopolization and excessive sub-contracting which raked-off the wages of stevedores and other dock laborers. The Egyptian government intervened to arrest the corrupt contractors after a four-day strike.<sup>16</sup> The Egyptian Ministry of Social Affairs played a limited role in attempting to stop abuses of this sort. By mutual agreement, ministry employees inspected work conditions at military camps, and mediated worker complaints. A new system of labor bureaus placed around 600 clerical workers and 2,000 skilled laborers in 1941 and 1942, but they did not effectively extend oversight to contractors of unskilled labor.<sup>17</sup>

Casual labor moreover had a low tolerance for working in dangerous areas. The Assistant Director for Pioneers and Labor for the Eighth Army in the Western Desert reported after serious bombing at Sidi Heneish camp nearly 1,000 Sa'idi laborers went on strike and demanded to be sent home. When the British army took no action, 700 men "jumped" a night freight train back to Alexandria.<sup>18</sup> The officer soon recruited a similar number of men, some of whom may have been the same individuals. When an explosion on an ammunition barge killed 100 Egyptians in Port Said, the full contingent of the dock laborers, 30 gangs, refused to work the next day without an increase in pay. The labor officer arranged for a Pioneer company to replace the Egyptians temporarily, which demonstrates the usefulness of having a few such military units in reserve to break

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<sup>15</sup> WO 169/4369 Deputy Assistant Director for P&L, Alexandria Area, Diary, 22 Dec. 1942.

<sup>16</sup> FO 371/41380, J2671/369/16, Report by Mr. T. E. Evans on Conditions of Labour and Trade Unions in Egypt, 28 July 1944, 14.

<sup>17</sup> DWQ 4029-000155 Ministry of Social Affairs Labor Department quarterly report, April 1943 n/d. Examples of P&L and Ministry of Social Affairs cooperation in WO 169/1034, ADPL British Troops in Egypt diary, 4 Apr., 13 July and 11 Sep. 1941;

<sup>18</sup> WO 169/1021 Asst. Director for P&L, Eighth Army, Diary, 8-12 Oct. 1941.

strikes.<sup>19</sup> To combat the unexpected movement of labor, the Egyptian authorities helped in the administration of a system of licenses and passes for all laborers entering the British military work zones.<sup>20</sup> Over time, the British abandoned some of the lax, inexpensive practices of labor employment at the beginning of the war, like allowing migrant laborers to stay in local villages, when a typhus scare occurred across the country in mid-1942. Egyptian laborers resented the more invasive measures the British army took to combat the disease, including clearing whole villages and forcing migrant and local laborers alike to live in hygienic camps, and in particular, forcing workers to undergo disinfestation and to wear lice-repellant lethane belts.<sup>21</sup>

Egyptian security cooperated in the creation of exclusive military work zones, even though the military camps became extraterritorial zones where Egyptians had little power to enforce labor conditions. After mistreatment from their employers, and unsuccessful attempts to seek help from the Egyptian authorities, workmen at the American Army Workshops, Heliopolis, petitioned Alexander Kirk, the American Ambassador to Egypt,

We have been very glad to work with the American Army, to do our duty in this war and help the Democracies. For a long time we have carried on our task energetically, working day and night, not minding any fatigue. But on March 20, 1943, which was pay day, one of the paymaster's staff started suddenly flogging our almost naked bodies. A brawl ensued... To make things worse, the officer under whom we used to work has been replaced by a new one who, unfortunately, has fallen under the influence of our oppressor and is now treating us very cruelly,

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<sup>19</sup> WO 169/4330 Asst. Director for P&L, British Troops in Egypt, Diary, 5 April 1942.

<sup>20</sup> These licensing systems were subject to constant negotiations between units in favor either of specificity, to stop unauthorized movement, or of inclusiveness in larger areas, to facilitate intentional transfer of laborers between units. WO 169/4398 DADPL Geneifa 79 Area, in the Canal Zone, suggests a very restrictive system whereby metal "tallies" would be fixed to the left wrist of each worker and they would be permanently assigned to work gangs (memorandum, 25 May 1942).

<sup>21</sup> See WO 169/9202 Asst. Director for P&L, Canal zone, Diary 26 Jan. 1943. The ADPL noted that they would not fire artisans who refused to submit to disinfestation, as the Egyptian government would only allow them "in the event of an epidemic."

insulting, threatening and discharging workmen without any reason although there is plenty of work and many hands are needed.<sup>22</sup>

Despite these experiences, unskilled labor was attracted to the British camps because the British paid seven to 10 piasters per day compared to an average of less than five piasters that a wage laborer could earn in agriculture, especially in the south. More privileged still were laborers who could receive training as apprentices and climb into the ranks of skilled workers and artisans to earn as much as 15 to 60 piasters per day. The British army only started keeping figures on skilled labor in 1941, which they further broke into “artisan” and “skilled labor” categories in 1942. While the number of unskilled laborers peaked at 100,000 around the time of the second battle of El-Alamein, when there were 30,000 artisans and 10,000 skilled laborers, the number of trained Egyptian workers continued to increase and plateau around 60,000 by the middle of 1943 until the end of the war.<sup>23</sup> This reflects both the maturation of the training of the Egyptian workforce, and the overall transformation of Egypt from a battle front into the main workshop for the Mediterranean theater, or as General Sir Bernard Paget wrote, “Though the war has continued to roll away from the NILE Valley, the MIDDLE EAST Base has continued to perform most of the same tasks for the EIGHTH ARMY, and other operational forces in ITALY as it did in the Desert Campaign.”<sup>24</sup>

Detailed reports from the No. 2 Royal Engineers Base in Al-Tal Al-Kabir reveal the rhythms of work and life at one of the largest ordnance workshops, which with the adjacent bases employed more than 17,000 Egyptian civilians at its peak in 1943-1944.

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<sup>22</sup> NARA, RG 84, 820, Kirk to Maj. Gen Robert W. Crawford, USAF in the Middle East, 12 May 1943, enclosed copy.

<sup>23</sup> These figures are compiled from British Middle East Force, Directorate of Pioneer and Labor, diaries in WO 169/36, 169/979, 169/3899, 169/8393, 169/15728, 169/19605 and 169/22927.

<sup>24</sup> Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, Kings College London, papers of Lt Gen Sir Wilfred Gordon Lindsell, 2/3, Memorandum, “The Middle East Base,” General Sir Bernard Paget Commander-in-Chief, Middle East Forces, 27 Oct. 1944.



*Figure 5.1. (L) Egyptian mechanics repair tanks in the British workshops. Display, El-Alamein Military Museum. (R) Egyptians paint land mines "under the supervision of a British NCO." IWM Photo Archive, E 28216.*

At the junction of rail and paved highway networks between Cairo and Ismailiya, and at the border between the inhabited farmland of Al-Sharqiya and the desert, it is no coincidence that this huge entrepot of Egyptian-British cooperation was built on the spot that the revolutionary Egyptian army of Ahmed 'Urabi capitulated to the British forces in 1882, starting the British military occupation of Egypt. Between 1941 and 1944, this workshop repaired or completely overhauled an average of 640 tanks and armored vehicles, 585 lighter motor vehicles and nearly 1,000 engines per month, in addition to a stream of thousands of artillery pieces and small arms and other essential fine military tools and mechanisms like rangefinders, sights, binoculars and periscopes, fuel gauges and thermometers and watches and clocks.<sup>25</sup> A British company of 238, including 31 officers and 131 soldiers trained as artisans oversaw 6-8,000 civilian workers mediated by 37 civilian clerks and foremen.<sup>26</sup>

Compared to the labor required in a typical infantry or service unit camp, these workshops required far more skilled labor, which the recruiting officers had difficulty

<sup>25</sup> WO 201/2666C Report of 2 Base Workshops, REME Al-Tal Al-Kabir, Appendix 121.

<sup>26</sup> WO 201/2666C Report of 2 Base Workshops, REME Al-Tal Al-Kabir, Appendix 113.

finding initially. They worked closely with Egyptian officials to hire the passing students of trade schools in the Delta cities of Mansoura, Tanta and Zagazig, but also instituted a training period of 2 to 6 weeks for unskilled artisan mates to achieve the rank of Class III fitter.<sup>27</sup> This was the most common grade of worker in these shops, who worked on assembly lines that required refined knowledge of several precision tools and procedures. These workers received wages of 14 to 27 piasters per day. However, the labor officer complained of a labor turnover of 25% *per month*, which kept training costs relatively high.

In late 1942, the office of the British Minister of State for the Middle East commissioned a study of service-wide civilian employment practices to try to understand and combat these high levels of labor turnover and “wastage.” With comprehensive surveys of many different units like the workshop at Al-Tal Al-Kabir, the report determined that the monthly rate of 25% turnover of workers was typical throughout the military, particularly among trained artisans, because “Different methods of applying wage rates and scales result in considerable inter-unit and inter-service competition giving rise to the continual movement of labour,” and “Rates and pay of civilian contractors are alleged to be generally higher than those paid by the army.”<sup>28</sup> In the case of the Al-Tal Al-Kabir camps, such contract work included machining, casting, forging and welding replacement parts, which they tendered to small shops in the surrounding delta towns, despite the fact that many lacked capital to do the work and needed to have part of the payment forwarded to them to purchase supplies.<sup>29</sup> Manufacturing contractors with service and transport units did lighter work, typically the assembly of tins and

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<sup>27</sup> WO 201/2666B Report of 2 Base Workshops, REME Al-Tal Al-Kabir, main section, 143.

<sup>28</sup> WO 922/174, Memorandum “LABOUR SURVEY OF EGYPT,” WT Matthews, May 1943, n/d, 1a.

<sup>29</sup> WO 201/2666B Report of 2 Base Workshops, REME Al-Tal Al-Kabir, main section, 74.

	Unskilled	Skilled	Artisan	Total
Dec. 1940		undifferentiated		31482
Mar. 1941	34,997	11,297		46,294
Jul. 1941	60,070	18,590		78,660
Oct. 1941	77,229	20,248		97,477
Feb. 1942	74,101	10,764	16,809	101,674
Apr. 1942	82,703	10,530	22,676	115,909
Aug. 1942	86,864	10,282	28,521	125,667
Oct. 1942	102,772	10,994	32,491	146,257
Jan. 1943	83,518	11,583	36,436	131,537
Apr. 1943	89,965	10,852	40,091	140,908
Jul. 1943	89,771	11,035	47,008	147,814
Oct. 1943	87,423	10,976	45,495	143,894
Jan. 1944	72,865	10,507	47,051	130,423
Mar. 1944	73,483	7,784	46,698	127,965
	Egyptian Civilian	Italian POW	German POW	
Feb. 1946	96,955	28,178	26,396	151,529

*Figure 5.2. Egyptian civilians employed directly in British military units or workshops. This does not include workers for outside contractors, who employed an additional one third of all Egyptian. WO 169/36, 169/979, 169/3899, 169/8393, 169/15728, 169/19605 and 169/22927, War Diaries of the BTE Director of Labor, 1940-1946.*

canisters, which were in high demand, and tailoring and textile work, in firms ranging from 60 to 2,000 workers.<sup>30</sup> Noting the difficulty in maintaining the quality of work because of this cycle of replacement, the report concluded that “in the Canal area due to task work system contractors’ employees earn about double money paid for day’s work by W.D. and [because] civilian contractors have a very much closer system of supervision and get a very much greater output from their employees.”<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, Egyptian workers moved to civilian contractors for less tangible reasons than wages alone. Many wished to live closer to home rather than in military camps or to avoid long commutes to desert areas, and to prevent the occasional abuse that resulted from bureaucratic inconsistency, cultural miscommunication between officers and Egyptian foremen, or simply the racism of British and American personnel.

<sup>30</sup> FO 921/290 Col. MJ Hathaway to Robert Peers, “Report on Contractors,” 25 February 1944.

<sup>31</sup> WO 922/174, Memorandum “LABOUR SURVEY OF EGYPT,” WT Matthews, May 1943, n/d, 27.

Although the British military labor managers genuinely wanted to improve working conditions, or better coordinate the level of wages between divisions of the army and contractors, they generally had few incentives to do so. Employing Egyptians was much cheaper than using pioneer labor brought from Africa, India or even Palestine, and the aggressive surveillance of wages would have required an expense that would not have paid off, considering the always fluctuating needs of the army.

#### HIS MAJESTY THE PIASTER

The total military expenditure in Egypt amounted to LE 70 million per year between 1942 and 1944, a sum roughly equivalent to the state budget in each of those years. Because the Egyptian pound was pegged to the British pound Sterling, Britain could easily expand its Egyptian credit by selling British treasury bonds to the National Bank of Egypt, the issuer of Egyptian currency. By the end of the war, Egypt's total credit to Britain amounted to LE 450 million and total money in circulation had increased from LE 26 million to LE 140 million. At the bottom of the scale, the hoarding of small change, millieme and piaster coins, made life difficult for the lower classes. As the Egyptian government and economists from the Middle East Supply Center complained by the end of the war, the British military had made no effort to restrain its spending in the broader interest of limiting its negative impact on the Egyptian economy.

The government approached the management of the economy with the same bureaucratic and juridical style as it did with supply problems. It implemented emergency military proclamations that were wholly reactionary to current conditions, passed in consultation with British and business figures, but without the transparency of

parliamentary legislation. Although the Wafd party eventually used its brief term of unchallengeable power to pass permanent parliamentary legislation affecting working conditions and labor organization, the use of the state of siege to arrest strikers or appease them with unplanned temporary cost of living bonuses further entrenched the “labor problem” as a public security issue in this period.

The beginning of the war witnessed a brief downturn in economic activity because of the interruption of the supply of raw materials and markets for finished products.<sup>32</sup> This provided industrial workers in new concentrations since the middle of the 1930s their first test of strength against management. At the Henry Pierre textile factory in Shubra, workers went on hunger strike for four days after an entire shift was laid off in early 1940. In response, Ali Mahir passed Military Proclamation 75, which made it a crime under military jurisdiction both for workers to stage strikes and for employers to lay any workers off in industries of “public utility or general interest.” In this case, the government included large textile factories in that industry definition.<sup>33</sup>

The nature of worker’s struggles shifted when the war boom came into full swing. Productive activity eventually evolved to address import substitution demands, encouraging new or expanded output in metals, such as ferro-alloy, cast iron and steel, lead pipes and asbestos production, a wide variety of chemicals like battery acid, bleach, calcium carbonate for welding and sulphur, and consumer goods and appliances, primus and cooking stoves, cigarette lighters, and glass and ceramic ware. The production of

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<sup>32</sup> Nawāl ‘Abd al-‘Āzīz Rāḍī, *Aḍwa’ Jadīda ‘Ala Al-Ḥaraka Al-‘Ummāliya Al-Miṣriyya, 1930-1945* (Cairo: Maṭba‘a Jāmi‘at al-Qāhira, 1977), 131-133.

<sup>33</sup> Beinín and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 283.



soap, matches and cement expanded nearly to satisfy the full domestic demand.<sup>34</sup>

Employment levels in manufacturing rose accordingly, from roughly 450,000 before the war to 700,000 by 1947. However, because of the labor mobility demonstrated above, which extended to private sector factories that contracted to the military, a much larger number of Egyptians spent some time in a factory setting. When MESC economist Robert Peers inquired into employment patterns at the Misr group textile mills at Mahalla al-Kubra, the largest such factories in Egypt, he discovered that:

After the outbreak of war, a large number of their original workers migrated to the larger towns, especially Cairo and Alexandria, where they could earn much higher wages working long hours for small textile employers, instead of being tied down to an eight-hour shift. Their places were filled by recruits from the surrounding country. Meanwhile, however, the first wave of migrants, having got to the large towns, had discovered that they could earn still higher wages by working for the Forces, and many of them even acquired skilled trades... the third recruitment of the latter involved a new and more widespread collection from rural areas.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Misr group, the largest private industrial concern in Egypt, made major expansions during the war to produce cotton textiles for military tents, uniforms and drop chutes, political circumstances forced it to commit the majority of its output to the domestic market as yarn for hand weavers or coarse “popular” fabric.<sup>36</sup> The industry’s profit margins were therefore reduced by the cost of the high quality long staple cotton used in the production of this fabric, while the retail prices of the cloth were fixed by government decree. Under these conditions of supply and employment poaching, skill was not as important to the company as keeping costs down, and so wages stagnated.

Workers in services on which the government enjoyed or had granted a monopoly, like public utilities, rail and streetcar transportation, printing and policing,

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<sup>34</sup> Mahmoud Ahmad Anis, “National Income of Egypt,” *L’Egypte Contemporaine*, No. 261-262, Nov.-Dec. 1950, 780-782.

<sup>35</sup> FO 921/310, memorandum, “Post-War Employment Prospects: Egypt,” Robert Peers, 5 Sep. 1944.

<sup>36</sup> FO 922/372, MESC memorandum, “Cotton Yarn Production - Egypt” JD Hynd, 27 Oct 1944.



Figure 5.3. Inflation.. Inflation! (L) Prices of basic consumer goods had increased 40% between 1939 and the end of 1941. The price level tripled by the end of 1944. (R) Popular economics: Prime Minister Sirri provides a stool "Cost of Living Adjustment" to the everyman Ibn al-Balad reaching for "Prices of Necessities." A war profiteer promptly moves the sack to a higher shelf. *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, (L) October 4, and (R) December 8, 1941.

who relied on seniority of tenure to obtain raises and benefits, also confronted the falling value of their wages because they could not as readily switch jobs. The demonstration effect of social interactions with workers in the British workshops worsened the perception of falling behind. In his memoirs, Muhammad Hafiz, a leader in the General Union of the Royal Printing Press and president of the executive board of the Congress of Government Workers in the 1930s and 1940s, recalled: "The [other industrial workers] would see them and meet up with them after they had received their very high salaries. Many of them would go around the shops carrying 10 pound notes [200 times the daily wage of an unskilled laborer], and the illustrated magazines published pictures of them... lighting cigarettes with 10 pound notes. We as government workers were in a very tight position as our salaries were meager..."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Published in Rāḍī, *Aḍwa' Jadīda 'Ala Al-Ḥaraka Al-'Ummāliya*, 270. Description of Hafiz from Beinun and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 288.

The privation of the average Egyptian worker was not psychological alone. The average retail cost of living index for food was 40% higher than 1939 prices by the end of 1941, 93% by 1942, 163% by 1943, and reached 212% in 1944, a level at which it roughly remained for the rest of the 1940s.<sup>38</sup> The intensity of this inflation and the falling standard of living, combined with the spread of industrial employment, gave a powerful stimulus to the labor movement and to labor issues in the public sphere. Egypt's working class had been searching for its voice and place in the nationalist movement since the 1919 revolution. After a brief period of independent activism and communist organization leading to the establishment of parliamentary politics in 1924, labor organization became dominated by the patronage of non-worker groups or individuals. Depending on its political fortunes, the Wafd party could provide public support towards and in turn expect the allegiance of industrial labor, and government workers in particular, despite the generally poor prevailing economic conditions and the slow expansion of industry until the mid-1930s.

During periods the Wafd was out of power, such as the years after a schism in late 1937 through the beginning of the war, a variety of other political forces sought to mobilize workers for their political ends. The most notable example was 'Abbas Halim, a cadet prince of the Muhammad Ali dynasty, who had led the Wafdist National Federation of Trade Unions in the early 1930s, but who eventually became a rival with support in the pro-palace groups like Misr al-Fatat. Just prior to the war, 'Abbas Halim obtained the leadership of the Cairo Tramway Workers Union and expanded it to include several other minor bus and tram unions in 1940.<sup>39</sup> It was natural, given the instability of labor

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<sup>38</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Finance, *Annuaire Statistique*, 1945, 720.

<sup>39</sup> Beinun and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 247-248.

conditions in competitive private industry, that this new transport union was the first to stage a large-scale strike in response to the decline in their real wages. The government had made localized 10% monthly cost of living bonuses to government workers in the Suez Canal zone as danger and hardship pay starting in June 1941.

On September 17, 1941, all public transportation workers besides cab drivers struck in Cairo demanding they too receive this benefit. Despite the fact the prime minister had the power as military governor to crack down on the protests severely, he chose instead to make the 10% cost of living adjustment universal to all government employees making less than 10 piasters a month. The council of ministers set aside LE 200,000 for these payments for the remainder of the year, which was expanded to LE 800,000 through the end of the 1941-1942 fiscal year.<sup>40</sup> They soon expanded this into a progressive scheme that would pay up to 50% per month for the lowest income workers with three or more children, with an expanded budget of LE 2 million. Although the government stopped short of mandating a cost of living adjustment for workers in private industry, affiliated companies were outraged. The Fayoum and Delta Light Railways complained their workers would have very good grounds for demanding such a bonus after the Egyptian State Railway workers received theirs, claiming higher expenses and concessions to military travelers were pushing down their profits.<sup>41</sup>

Business owners were right to be nervous. The concept of the cost of living adjustment spread rapidly through public discourse among workers and administrators. 500 workers at the Beso textile mill, a Greek firm in Shubra al-Khayma, launched a hunger strike in January 1942 for improved wages, and obtained a 10% cost of living

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<sup>40</sup> DWQ 0081-097208 Minutes of the Council of Ministers, 29 Sep., 13 Oct. 1941

<sup>41</sup> DWQ 0081-97208 Isma'il Sidqi to Husayn Sirri, 4 and 7 Nov. 1941. These companies forwarded their complaints through Sidqi, who was then president of the Egyptian Federation of Industry.

adjustment on the intervention of the new Wafd ministry in March.<sup>42</sup> Because the British military wage scale was not as flexible as wages available in private factories, unskilled laborers in military workshops eventually also demanded a similar bonus as government workers in strikes in the spring and summer of 1942, and ultimately received a concession of 20% bonuses for workers whose monthly wages were less than LE 3 in June. Suez, perhaps the fastest-growing city in this period thanks to migrant labor, witnessed major strikes at the Shell oil refinery and Khedivial Mail Line docks at Port Fuad over the issue of bonuses, both of which necessitated arrests and trials in military courts.<sup>43</sup> In December 1942, the military governor intervened with Military Proclamation 358, which extended the requirement of a cost of living bonus at the same rate as the government to all workers in private enterprises employing 50 or more workers, and added an absolute minimum wage of 7.5 piastres per day for government workers. As prices continued to rise, the ritual of increasing the cost of living adjustment through military proclamation became institutionalized on an annual basis for the remaining two years of the war. Al-Nahas increased the values of the entire scheme of bonuses to 70% maximum in Proclamation 451 in December 1943, and the new ministry of Ahmed Mahir increased it further to 100% for the poorest workers with Proclamation 548 in December 1944. Mahir's successor Mahmoud al-Nuqrashi grandfathered these military proclamations into the civil code in October 1945, and it became a permanent feature of government and large industrial salaries.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Beinun and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 289.

<sup>43</sup> FO 371/41380, J2671/369/16, Report by Mr. T. E. Evans on Conditions of Labour and Trade Unions in Egypt, 28 July 1944, 12.

<sup>44</sup> *Al-Muhamma* Magazine, Vol. 15, Nos. 7-8 (Mar.-Apr. 1945).

The state budget's funding for cost of living adjustments for government workers accordingly expanded during the war to become its single largest line item. By 1943, the sum reserved for this program totaled LE 7.8 million, or 10% of the total state budget, and increased to LE 11 million in the 1945 budget. The burgeoning of this budgetary item reflects Egyptian bureaucrats' economic expectations that the wage level would return to normal after the war. Because it did not decline, and escalated further after the Palestine and Korean wars, the budgeted amount only increased to LE 26 million in the 1950-1951 budget, when the adjustment maximum was raised to 150% of the lowest-earning workers' wages. More fundamentally, the strategy of adjustment by emergency statute added a political volatility to the wage rate of government and private workers. The government announced bonuses frequently as a tool to display its support of workers, but it did not have the resources to strictly enforce these regulations in the private sector. This shortcoming threatened meant many workers had difficulty receiving their bonuses, especially the great majority working in small factories. The Mixed Courts Journal noted that the proclamations' penalties of three months in prison and no more than LE 50 per infraction would not be high enough to encourage private employers to comply.<sup>45</sup> As a result, many of the labor struggles of 1943 were strikes in which workers tried merely to get their employers to obey the military legislation and pay the bonuses. Moreover, the journal's editors foresaw that fixed cost of living bonuses would depress increases in the "base wage" for new workers over time. Given that the average wage for unskilled and skilled adult male industrial workers inclusive of the bonus rose from nearly 8 piasters per day before the war to 16 piasters by 1945, this increase seems to track the legally

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<sup>45</sup> Editorial, "L'indemnité obligatoire de vie chère," *Journal Des Tribunaux Mixtes*, 14-15 Dec. 1942.

mandated bonus schedule very closely.<sup>46</sup> However, because of a 200% rise in the consumer price index, the real wage fell by one third during the war.

Just as the state of siege made these unilateral cost of living adjustments a quick and easy way to relieve the pressure of worker protest at appropriate moments, the Wafd sought to bureaucratize labor protest itself by military proclamation in the interest of wartime security. In the midst of the February 1942 Beso mill strike, just after the Wafd took office, Mustafa Al-Nahhas issued Proclamation 239 on March 23, creating district-level labor conciliation and arbitration committees headed by the Governor or Mudir (regional executive) with the power to issue legally binding settlements between workers and management. This replaced an older arrangement in which the labor department of the Ministry of Social Affairs made non-binding recommendations. As a result of this proclamation, internal labor department records noted the number of complaints it received doubled from 1940 to 1942 to 5,000, of which 2,047 were disputes over the application of the cost of living adjustment, but that with the power to mandate a solution, more than two thirds of the disputes were settled “positively.”<sup>47</sup> As soon as he issued the proclamation, Al-Nahhas made a public statement strongly warning the workers that now that they had a legitimate and legal avenue for airing their complaints with their employers strikes would no longer be necessary and would be treated according to the harshest letter of the law.<sup>48</sup> This emergency-imposed system was also grandfathered into civilian law until mid-1948, when the commissions were redefined

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<sup>46</sup> Mahmoud Ahmad Anis, “National Income of Egypt,” *L’Egypte Contemporaine*, No. 261-262, Nov.-Dec. 1950, 805.

<sup>47</sup> DWQ 4029-000155, 1942 Annual Report of the Conciliation and Arbitration Department, Ministry of Social Affairs.

<sup>48</sup> Rāḍī, *Aḍwa’ Jadīda ‘Ala Al-Ḥaraka Al-‘Ummāliya*, 103; Goldberg, *Tinker, Tailor, and Textile Worker*, 165.

under normal legislation to impose actual judicial power over the proceedings after workers secured too many politically unpopular concessions from companies such as the Suez Canal Company and Anglo-Egyptian Oilfields.<sup>49</sup>

As illustrated above, the number of protests and strikes, sometimes coordinated between workers in military camps and civilian firms, only increased as the war progressed. But compared to the rate of prosecution and imprisonment of black marketeers, the government's use of military courts to coerce striking workers was relatively lenient. The Ministry of Interior brought strikers to trial most commonly only when they had done violence to management, their tools or to the police — and usually in small groups. For example, 14 teenage workers at the Shurbagi spinning and weaving factory struck on June 17, 1942. They destroyed several spinning machines and assaulted the Ma' mur (chief Interior administrator) of Ramleh district and a squad of men, wounding two. The Alexandria Military Court sentenced the ringleaders, Sa'ad Naqawi and Mar'ai Ahmad Mar'ai to two years in prison, six of the remaining 12 to one year, and found the others innocent.<sup>50</sup>

These disputes and strikes in the first few years of the war intensified public debate about the labor movement and its connection to the standard of living for the working class and the poor in general. The Wafd sought to capitalize on its wartime window of opportunity and on the temporary good will of labor unions toward its 10-year proposed legislative program by acting quickly to establish its bona fides. The official magazine of the Ministry of Social Affairs was here again a useful tool for floating ideas for legislation while negotiations with oppositional forces in parliament and private

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<sup>49</sup> FO 371/73474, Campbell to FO, "Report on Labor and Social Affairs in Egypt in 1948," 19 April 1949.

<sup>50</sup> DWQ 0081-030609, Military Felony 711 for 1943, report from 23 Feb. 1944.



business were in the formative stages. Director of the Ministry's Labor Department, Radi Abu Sayf Radi, wrote an editorial on "The Problem of the Worker," lamenting the fact that there was "no relationship between worker and employer." As a result of the casual status of day labor in most factories, it was difficult to obtain any benefits for workers, including the new cost of living adjustments. In response, he proposed a slate of legislation the ministry had been formalizing since the beginning of 1942 that would formalize and legalize trade union activity and mandate individual contracts between workers and employers of certain sizes and compulsory worker insurance.<sup>51</sup>

Emboldened by the Wafd's outspoken support of unionization, workers in several trades founded or bought small newspapers to support and promote organizing activities with different rhetoric from the reform-and-welfare discourse of the Ministry of Social Affairs. *Al Madaniya*, the newspaper of the Egyptian General Printer's Union, argued that the liberty of labor organization is one of the underlying tenets of democracy in the modern world, explicitly referencing the country's fight for global democracy.<sup>52</sup> Another of the more independent unions, the General Union of Mechanized Textile Workers of Shubra al-Khayma and Cairo, appropriated *Shubra* and published editorials with an even stronger tenor. In the months leading to the vote on unions, *Shubra* editorials stressed the crucial role of workers in a modern "war of logistics" and decried the moves of organizations like the Egyptian Federation of Industries to imply workers should reduce their demands at these times.<sup>53</sup> Yet at this phase, even the textile workers were focusing on the reciprocity of duties between the government and the workers, as structured through the law.

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<sup>51</sup> Radi Abu Sayf Radi, "The Problem of the Worker," *Social Affairs Magazine*, 1 Mar. 1942.

<sup>52</sup> Mahmoud Muhammad Ahmad, "Democracy and the Principles of Labor," *Al-Madaniya*, 16 June 1942.

<sup>53</sup> "The Federation of Industries and the War of Nerves (I'sāb, logistics)" *Shubra*, 16 July 1942.

The Wafd quickly secured its chief goal, the legalization of labor unions, in September 1942. As was typical for a legislature dominated by agricultural interests, the major opposition was against allowing agricultural workers and domestic servants to organize, a stipulation to which the Wafd leadership agreed.<sup>54</sup> Passing the law was an extension of its strategy with the conciliation committees. The workers rushed to register unions, opening 311 with approximately 120,000 members in the first two years after the passage of the law, of which the majority had fewer than 200 members and represented small crafts. The largest unions represented workers in the transport and textiles industry, culminating with 17,000 workers registered at Misr Weaving and Spinning in Mahalla al-Kubra.<sup>55</sup>

If the workers were the army of the Egyptian nation, as *Shubra* magazine so confidently asserted, then the Wafd wanted this army to be under its command. The legitimization of labor negotiations made it easier to establish patron-client relationship with the unions. The law's stipulations prevented local and factory unions from federating into nationwide organizations, and so the Ministry of Social Affairs acted as their principal mediators; as many as 30 unions took office space with the Wafd in central Cairo. A good share of the success of the Wafd's pro-union strategy is due to the popularity among workers of the new Minister of Social Affairs, 'Abd al-Halim 'Abd al-Haq, who had been so outspoken against the state of siege as the opposition leader in parliament in 1939. Although his popularity was in part manufactured by the Wafd-owned worker's newspaper *Al-Yara*, he did make a large effort to meet with unions and respond to their concerns, going so far as to insinuate that he disagreed with al-Nahhas'

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<sup>54</sup> See parliamentary debate, *Madabit Majlis al-Nuwwab*, 3-5 Aug. 1942, 1210-1220.

<sup>55</sup> FO 371/41380, J2671/369/16, Report by Mr. T. E. Evans on Conditions of Labour and Trade Unions in Egypt, 28 July 1944, 26-29.

ban on striking in the pages of *Shubra*.<sup>56</sup> It appears the new unions even took advantage of the split between the progressive wing of the Wafd and its leadership. The unions planned a special celebration for 20,000 unionized Cairene workers on May 30, 1943 to highlight the achievements of the Ministry of Social Affairs in the prior year. Although the workers made Al-Nahhas' speech the centerpiece of the event, 'Abd al-Haq received significant homage, and he spoke of compassion for workers and plans for future legislation. The workers in return declared their intention to celebrate May 30 as Egyptian Labor Day henceforth. The upper-class backlash after the event was immediate, and gave Al-Nahhas an appropriate pretext to remove 'Abd al-Haq from his post in favor of rising young aristocrat Fu'ad Sirag Al-Din.<sup>57</sup> 'Abd al-Haq was transferred to the Ministry of Awqaf (religious endowments), where he immediately began a program nationalizing a large area of land north of Giza and directly west of the Nile from Cairo to form a "Waqf City" to house the poor. President Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir would later grant most of this land for chic villas for the technocratic middle class of the late 50s and 60s, and the neighborhood acquired the name Mohandiseen ("Engineers") instead.

Government bureaucrats were kept to fixed pay grades, and they felt the crush of inflation as equally as the working class, if in ways more connected to the consumption expected of their middling class. By the end of 1943, the mass magazines were reporting on the dilemmas of the home economics of this class in a way more intimate than the "labor problem" of the working class masses. In a typical article in *Al-Ithnein wa-l-Dunya*, "This is how Muhammad Effendi Lives!," a brief interview with the family of a government clerk at the sixth grade who made LE 15 per month reveals they needed to

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<sup>56</sup> Beinlin and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 296-298.

<sup>57</sup> Taha Sa'd 'Uthmān, *Min Ta'rīkh Al-Ṭabaqa Al-'Āmila Al-Miṣriyya: Kifāh 'Ummāl Al-Nasīj Fī Miṣr* (Shubrā al-Khayma, 1983), 89-94.



Figure 5.4. The travail of the effendi salaryman. (L) "**Because of Inflation:** —Who's that poor guy? —That's a grade 4 employee!" (i.e. a department head who earned around LE 40 a month, staunchly upper middle class), (R) "**Surprise of the Week:** The employee who arrives at the ministry wearing a new suit." *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, June 19 and Jan. 24, 1944.

make difficult decisions about expenditures. The typical month's unguarded purchases totaled LE 21.65, which included LE 2.50 for rent, LE 8.60 for food, which had more than doubled during the war, but also LE 1.50 for cigarettes, LE 1 for school fees, LE 4 for clothing and laundering and, notably, only LE 1 for his housemaid.<sup>58</sup> Although by the end of the war, the cost of living bonus was giving demonstrable help to workers lower down on the wage scale: "Muhammad Effendi" would have received a monthly bonus of as much as 30% or LE 5. The weekly magazines frequently published brief essays and cartoons lampooning the desperate penury of bureaucrats at higher pay grades that had formerly elicited respect and envy. The economic pain of salaried bureaucrats casts an important light on the efforts of the employees of the Ministries of Social Affairs and Supply to help rewrite the social contract between the government, private employers and workers that I have examined throughout this dissertation.

<sup>58</sup> "This is How Muhammad Effendi Lives!" *Al-Ithnayn wal-Dunya*, 29 Nov. 1943, 12.

In general, government clerical workers' tactics differed from the working class. By the end of the war, internal associations of employees from individual ministries, or larger groupings from different offices of employees that shared educational qualifications or pay grades, launched petition campaigns to secure higher wages, predictability in the rate of promotion, job security and other benefits. Upon the collapse of the Wafd government in October 1944, new Finance Minister Makram 'Ubayd moved to secure the loyalties of these employees by issuing the first government wide "cadre for employees" on November 23 that set not just consistent salary grades, but also a schedule for promotion, and other benefits.<sup>59</sup> Although many workers lauded this new program, the outpouring of petitions to the king afterwards indicates the huge variety of government employees, contracted or casual workers that were left out of it and their high level of organization. These petitions came from such groups as "Employees of the Ports Department of the Communication and Transportation Ministry holding a primary education certificate," "Employees of the Finance Ministry holding the Baccalaureate," "Scribes of the Division of Railway Engineers," "Qena Governorate workers holding the Al-Azhar secondary certificate," and many others.<sup>60</sup> *Al-Ithnayn*'s satirical response was that the government should instead improve the standard of living of everyone holding a "birth certificate."<sup>61</sup>

The British had an ambivalent attitude towards Egyptian governments' new engagement with the labor movement. Egyptian liberals took many of their cues on labor

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<sup>59</sup> Beinun and Lockman, *Workers on the Nile*, 301-303.

<sup>60</sup> DWQ 0069-007891, 1944 government employee petitions to the King's Diwan: 5 Dec., "Ports Department;" 26 Nov., "Finance Ministry;" 13 Dec. "Railway Engineers;" 7 Dec., "Qena Governorate." Other petitions include 4 Dec., the customs police (who want the proprietary customs inspection exam to count as a baccalaureate); 9 Dec. "Shahada holders of the Health Ministry warehouses;" and 12 Dec., the overworked "cinema inspectors union."

<sup>61</sup> Cartoon, *Al-Ithnayn w-al-Dunya*, 17 Jan 1944, 19.

from current British policy. For example, legislator and popular writer ‘Abbas Mahmoud Al-‘Aqqad editorialized favorably the rising fortunes of the trade unions in Britain under the leadership of Ernest Bevin as Minister of Labor, and of the Emergency Powers (Defense) Act in 1940, which used wartime insecurity as a pretext to corporatize unions to reduce labor disputes.<sup>62</sup> ‘Abd al-Haq had translated and publicized the report by Lord Beveridge presenting a comprehensive liberal plan for social security for Britain in 1942, explicitly drawing a connection between his ministry’s plans for reform and this platform, which became the basis of the welfare state in Britain starting in the postwar Labour party government.

At the same time, the Allies were often suspicious of more progressive members of the Ministry of Social Affairs as representing a leftist vanguard in the Egyptian government. The British knew best how tenuous the Wafd’s hold on power was in this period, and they were afraid of encouraging political groups that could be difficult to control after the Wafd left government. After his dismissal from the Ministry of Social Affairs, the British embassy considered ‘Abdel Haq a man “who in moments of pessimism is spoken of as future Labour Prime Minister of Egypt.”<sup>63</sup> Although the British were frequently complimentary of Radi, the American legation suspected the Labor department in encouraging a variety of labor actions including the strike of the Khedivial Mail Line workers in 1943.<sup>64</sup> Moreover, the British continued to oppose, with little success, work, welfare, visa and residency legislation that British businesses felt discriminated against the employment of non-Egyptians, which the next chapter will

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<sup>62</sup> Mahmoud Abbas Al-Aqqad, “The Workers in The War” *Radio Misri magazine*, 3 May 1941.

<sup>63</sup> FO 371/41380, J2671/369/16, Report by Mr. T. E. Evans on Conditions of Labour and Trade Unions in Egypt, 28 July 1944, 24.

<sup>64</sup> NARA, RG 84, 850.4, Holder to Kirk, 19 July 1943.

examine in more depth. Towards the end of the war, the British gained more enthusiasm for actively guiding the Egyptian labor movement. In 1945, the Labour Government sent a committed labor councillor to the Cairo Embassy, M. Audsley, to actively encourage the further corporatization of the individual trade unions into a federation with strong links to the International Labor Organization that could quell communistic tendencies at individual shops.<sup>65</sup> For example, he arranged a high-profile delegation of Egyptian union leaders to tour Britain in the summer of 1946. However, the Egyptian governments after the Wafd were far less eager to encourage formal labor organization, especially after the labor and nationalist students started launching unified strikes in 1946 opposing the political compromises these governments had made with the postwar British military occupation.

#### RECONCILING UNEMPLOYMENT, PLANNING AND LIBERALISM

British and Egyptian economists became aware that legislating progressively higher cost of living adjustments, under the condition of severely restricted supply, would only increase the level of inflation, leading to a cycle of price and wage increases. Egyptian governments confronted pressure from every political interest group in the country, expressed in the language of conflicting economic theories, over policies to reduce inflation by withdrawing money from circulation through increased taxation or other measures. Notably, while the Middle East Supply Center had a large impact on the condition of commodity consumption in Egypt because of their control on imports, their purview over the long-term fiscal health of the countries of the Middle East was limited both by their jurisdiction and by military exigency. The Cairo office of the MESC hosted

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<sup>65</sup> FO 141/1067 Memorandum: Development of Communism in Egypt, M Audsley, 28 Aug. 1945.

an impressive-sounding regional Anti-Inflation conference in September 1942 and an even larger Middle East Financial Conference in April 1944. In these meetings it attempted to shape a broader postwar plan to stabilize regional trade and state budgets — and in the process, secure Britain's postwar political hegemony. But these meetings tended to reemphasize the necessity of rationing and price controls, and touched only briefly on the concept that the excess demand for goods and labor was itself overheating prices because this demand was inflexible.

Crucially, the state of siege did not give the Egyptian prime minister power to raise revenue through taxation or artificially alter the state budget by fiat. Parliament did pass a range of new taxes to fund its necessary wartime programs and to try to absorb the surplus purchasing power as a result of British military spending, but the overall levels of taxation were low and enforcement lax. It is important to note again that most forms of direct taxation beyond the land tax had been nearly impossible to implement in a politically acceptable fashion prior to the 1937 Montreux convention, as foreigners had been exempted from the Egyptian penal and civil code until that point. The most notable new tax was the 1941 surtax on exceptional profits. It followed a progressive scale of 20% on profits higher than 8% of a company's invested capital, 35% on all profits beyond 25% of that amount, and 50% on profits beyond 50%. The scale was increased to 30-70% in 1943. The tax did bring in around LE 6 million in extra revenue each year between 1942 and 1944, or a declining 9-7% of total state revenue over time.

It is possible that this tax could have brought in far more revenue than it ultimately did. The Egyptian Ministry of Finance experienced difficulty in enforcing the excess profits tax because the British military refused to cooperate in reporting the names



of its contractors and the volume of business and sums paid to them over the course of the war. Although this law was based on similar legislation implemented in Britain and its colonies at this time, Lampson complained to Prime Minister Husayn Sirri about the logistical difficulty for military headquarters in supplying detailed information on all contractors with more than LE 500 contracts, in Arabic, to the Ministry of Finance. Sirri was concerned that a great number of contractors were new to business on that scale and would operate in cash without formal accounting and hence avoid taxation. Although Lampson agreed to establish a system to provide periodical summaries of this activity, the military staged a slow campaign of non-cooperation, protesting the security sensitivity of this information.<sup>66</sup> When the Egyptians tried again to look into the matter in 1949 to collect back taxes, the Foreign Office, confronted with the military's confusion as to why this matter would be sensitive any longer, had to create new excuses to keep this information back, as it "might give the Egyptian Government opportunities of raising contentious matters against the British government or British businesses."<sup>67</sup> The embassy discovered a loophole in Egyptian tax law whereby only the recipient of the income was liable to report it to the Egyptian government and this was their excuse for a final refusal. It is not surprising, in retrospect, that Egyptian contractors were able to pay their workers so well, given that they could avoid paying taxes on their profits so easily.

Land and other small-scale new income taxes brought the total amount of direct taxation to around LE 22 million, or a quarter of the budget by 1944-1945, from what had been a very minimal level prior to the war. The remainder of revenue came from licenses, tariffs and sales taxes and state property and enterprises. In particular because these taxes

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<sup>66</sup> DWQ 0081-042409, Lampson to Sirri, 17 Mar. 1941.

<sup>67</sup> FO 371/73547 WS Laver to African Secretary, 31 Oct. 1949.

were targeted at particular types of activity, and had not yet been compiled into a general income tax, the war saw increased public debate on tax policy among those particular subjects of increased tax. The Egyptian Federation of Industries raised the frequent complaint, not without merit, that the new taxes disproportionately targeted industrial and commercial entrepreneurs, while the level of agricultural land taxation stagnated. Parliament actually granted tax relief for smallholding peasants during the war, again a sign it preferred relief for the middle class over the laboring poor.

The Minister of Supply, Abd al-Magid Ibrahim Salih, issued a stinging rebuke to those who complained about high taxes in Egypt or sought to avoid paying them: “The treasury serves the people! Everyone who avoids paying taxes is a selfish coward... This is the only way Egypt will fund its reform programs. Combatting poverty, ignorance and sickness will require millions of pounds.” In a now familiar rebuke to liberal legality and politics, Salih ends his argument by stating, “the tax jurists will tell you that a state should only collect as much in taxes as it is willing to spend... I say the interest of the state is above all jurisprudence and fixed legislation — it is above everyone!”<sup>68</sup> In his rebuttal to the Minister of Supply, the liberal editor of *Al-Ahram*, Antoun Gamayel, warned against raising taxes too quickly before the capacity of the state to wisely use the revenue had been established. “If 100 workers are required to build a house in three months, then can we use 10,000 workers to build it in a matter of hours? This is not a practical solution,” he wrote.<sup>69</sup>

Gamayel’s critique had a basis in current practices at the Ministry of Finance. Although the level of taxation in Egypt was far below that of the European states that

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<sup>68</sup> Abd al-Magid Ibrahim Salih, “Should Taxes be Raised? Yes,” *Al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya*, 9 Aug. 1943.

<sup>69</sup> Antoun Gamayel, “Should Taxes be Raised? No,” *Al-Ithnayn wa-l-Dunya*, 9 Aug. 1943.

were active belligerents in the war, the Egyptian government actually had more difficulty in expanding state expenditures as fast as revenues, leading to large budget surpluses. Again, unplanned emergency measures that were legislated were targeted less at funding new welfare programs than at restraining illegal economic activity. Despite the complaints of opposition politicians about the general overstaffing and underemployment of all grades of the Egyptian bureaucracy, total employment in government stagnated during the war, increasing very slightly from 272,000 to 280,000 between 1940 and 1945.<sup>70</sup> Legislators were also wary of planning too many permanent programs that could require contraction if tax revenues declined after the war. They preferred instead to let the surplus accrue in the General Reserve, an accounting relic of the days of fiscal tightness during the late Ottoman era.

The liberals promoted other means of ensuring postwar stability through fiscal austerity and monetary deflation. Funneling populist anger against the ballooning sterling credits that opposition politicians like Watanist Hassan Galal frequently cited as a source of inflation and Egyptian bondage to Britain more generally, Wafd Finance Minister Amin Osman negotiated a conversion of the remaining £90 million external sovereign debt in pounds sterling to domestic treasury bills in Egyptian pounds in September 1943. The Wafd succeeded in portraying this as a nationalist triumph, at least among the bourgeoisie, who flocked to the banks to subscribe to the new bonds. One young man interviewed at the subscription desk said “I saved up 130 pounds with the sweat of my brow, and I didn’t know how to invest it, but I heard about the new bonds and I knew that they would bring great benefits to the country and to me personally...”<sup>71</sup> The Egyptians

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<sup>70</sup> Egyptian Ministry of Finance, *Annuaire Statistique*, 1940-1945.

<sup>71</sup> “In the Last Hour,” *Al-Itheneyn wa-l-Dunya*, 15 Nov. 1943.

similarly permitted the British to sell gold on the open market, one of the few places in the world without price restrictions. In this win-win arrangement, the British could obtain Egyptian currency without adding to the Egyptian sterling credit and at the same time Egyptians make a profit on nominal sterling prices in gold. However, sales were not as strong as hoped because they only began in late 1943, after the price of gold began to level off along with inflation, at a 30% premium over prices in India.

By early 1943, concerns about managing the wartime boom began to be replaced with anxiety over the potential for a postwar slump. The principal object of anxiety was the social effect of a large number of workers that would be released from the army workshops as work was transferred elsewhere, in addition to layoffs in private industry resulting from a decline in demand. Anticipating the wrenching economic transformation that the war's end would cause provoked equally wrenching intellectual debates about the nature of the economy itself. In the crucial late years of the war, different interest groups failed to reconcile the goal of stemming inflation, which had hurt wage laborers but threatened capital holders even more, with the goal of full employment, which would require strong prices. Early discourse on the potential for post-war unemployment lumped this issue vaguely with a large variety of social and economic problems, including education and illiteracy and the trade union movement broadly. In March 1943, *Al-Musawwar* surveyed opinions on solutions ranging from étatist work programs suggested by 'Abdel Haq through liberal arguments for restriction of work hours and the quick liberalization of industrial regulations after the war on the part of Ahmad 'Abboud.<sup>72</sup> Privately, the Egyptian government contended that the British military should create a program for the responsible demobilization of civilian workers in the army

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<sup>72</sup> Tahir Al-Tanahī, "The Unemployment Problem after the War," *Al-Musawwar*, 5 Mar. 1943.

workshops, with elements both of unemployment insurance and the transfer of Army industrial machinery and factories to civilian production. As with supply management, the government's low-cost social insurance planning required security oriented interventions. Hassan Rifaat, Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Interior, proposed to the Allied Headquarters that the Egyptian government pass a military proclamation requiring all Egyptian workers in Allied employment to save a share of their wages until their eventual layoff.<sup>73</sup> Fifteen logistical officers and diplomats met in August 1943 to discuss the practicality of this scheme. Although C.N. Ades, the Director of Pioneer and Labor department expressed hope that savings accounts would better tie down workers to their job and prevent absenteeism and poaching by contractors, they ultimately agreed with William Harpham of the British Embassy that it would add too much expense in administrative costs and lead to demands for higher wages.

The Wafd turned to a more general strategy to guarantee general forms of insurance for laid off workers, passing Law 41 of 1944 mandating individual contracts for workers in large industrial concerns. In addition to many different kinds of benefits, it required indemnities of 10 days' pay per year of continuous service for every worker discharged. The British military instantly perceived that since this law would be difficult to enforce for all but the largest plants, it was mostly a backup measure to the failed obligatory savings scheme of 1943. The law passed despite misgivings from Egyptian industry and the strong objections of the military to increased supervisory powers for the

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<sup>73</sup> NARA RG 84, 850.4 "Memorandum to the British and American Army Authorities, Hassan Rifaat, 28 July 1943.

Ministry of Social Affairs into disciplinary practices at the Army workshops themselves.<sup>74</sup>

British studies of the post-war Egyptian economy were essentially reactions to Egyptian political pressure and were again hampered by inter-bureaucratic disagreement. The Minister of State for the Middle East's office adapted the labor surveillance methods it had used to try to improve the efficiency among civilian workers in the prior two years to assess the extent of the problem. Professor Robert Peers conducted another survey of the workshops and contractors and presented a mixed picture: he at once gave evidence that the majority of the workers in the British workshops had been casual and unskilled laborers and had not formed either an attachment to their place of work or with industrial employment in particular, although 50,000 skilled artisans would require the continuation or transformation of their jobs. After stressing that the majority of these workers and their families would "never return to the land," he gives standard demographic arguments about the absorptive quality of the rural areas and hopes for its expansion by land reclamation. His summary recommendations include different ways of maximizing Egyptian employment, suggesting that expanding private and public works construction will be the most effective in the short run, with adapting and manufacturing over the longer run.<sup>75</sup> The military responded to these findings by downplaying the threat of layoffs in the immediate future. In reference to Peers' report, Lt. Gen. Arthur Dowler, MEF Chief of Administration, believed that "the EGYPTIAN Government are deliberately exaggerating the problem with the intention of using it as a stick with which

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<sup>74</sup> FO 921/291, "Egyptian Law on Individual Contract of Service," Maj. Gen G. Surtees, MEF Commander in Chief to War Office, 13 July 1944.

<sup>75</sup> FO 921/310, "Memorandum: EGYPT," Robert Peers, 5 Sep. 1944.

to beat us.”<sup>76</sup> British Financial Counsellor WJ Johnson, who saw Peers’ recommendations as a threat to British commercial prospects after the war, made a more incisive critique. Specifically, he warns that Peers’ policies to encourage local manufacturing through devaluation of the Egyptian pound against sterling could “destroy Egypt’s confidence in sterling.”<sup>77</sup>

The British and Egyptians entered into a series of joint committee conferences in late 1944 to reach consensus over the direction and funding of postwar demobilization and reemployment plans. The Ministry of Social Affairs proposed building on the recently established survey of industrial employment with a comprehensive registry of individual industrial workers and an expansion of the employment bureaus to smaller centers like Kafr el-Dawwar, Suez, Asyut and Mansoura. The Egyptians also kept up the pressure on the military to sell off dormant military factories and machinery for use in the private sector, although the British remained firmly non-committal.<sup>78</sup> The Egyptian representatives also introduced a formal resolution to develop a five year plan of government spending on public works and industry, based on a template developed by the International Labor Organization for post war development in smaller economies.

The transition after the victory in Europe 1945 to a higher rate of layoffs highlighted the different priorities of the civilian and military British establishment, as well as the tentativeness and inadequacy of the various social nets the Egyptians and British had discussed. At war’s end, the British Army initially claimed that the Anglo-Egyptian treaty exempted them from making the indemnity payments mandated in Law

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<sup>76</sup> FO 922/311, Dowler to Croft, Office of Minister Resident, Cairo, 1 Nov. 1944.

<sup>77</sup> FO 921/310, “Note by the Financial Counsellor on Professor Peers’ draft report...” W.J. Johnson, 17 Oct. 1944.

<sup>78</sup> Wafd Finance Minister Amin Osman proposed this in February 1944; FO 921/290. See ongoing negotiations in Madabit Majlis Al Nuwwab, 16 Apr. 1945, 397.

41. The Ministry of Social Affairs had announced in October 1945 payments would be made before the British relented came under. The Americans, who had no claim to immunity like the British, helped persuade the British to make a joint payment schedule by November. At any rate, the high turnover of labor at these workshops had left a small proportion of workers with evidence of one year of tenure in the workshops, which made the indemnity program little more than symbolic.<sup>79</sup>

Acrimony over the continued employment of Egyptians in the British workshops through the late 1940s had less to do with the precise number of Egyptians remaining than perceptions of unfairness. There had been prisoner-of-war labor in the workshops in Egypt since the first large wave of cooperative Italian captives in early 1941. Their impact on Egyptian employment was not noticed towards the end of the war as many Italians were repatriated in 1944 and 1945, freeing jobs for Egyptians as demand slackened. However, by 1946, the labor movement was scandalized to discover the extent of increased employment of German prisoner-of-war labor in military camps, replacing Egyptian workers. In representations to the British embassy, army officials claimed it was required of them “that whenever and wherever possible a saving must be effected in the expenditure of sterling in this country.”<sup>80</sup>

The American legation estimated the number of unemployed Egyptians by mid-1946 at as much as 400,000.<sup>81</sup> The Social Affairs employment bureaus ended up being ineffectual, getting only 15,000 visits from unemployed workers by mid-1946, of which the government was only able to find new jobs for 3,000, and provide subsidized meals and limited monetary aid for the rest. This low rate of success discouraged most workers

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<sup>79</sup> NARA RG 84 850, Lyon to State, 16 Nov. 1945.

<sup>80</sup> FO 371-53368, Lt. Gen C.W. Allfrey, Commander in Chief, BTE to Killearn, 11 Feb. 1946.

<sup>81</sup> NARA RG 59, 883.504/6-1246 “Unemployment in Egypt,” Tuck to State, 12 June 1946.



from bothering to register. As a desperate backup measure, the government was continuing to use Military Proclamation 75, extended by decree law, to prevent the textile industry from laying off its workers.<sup>82</sup> Rather than allaying anxiety, this practice was rather provoking workers, who had no way of knowing how low their total hours of weekly work would sink, towards greater militancy. The ministry finally prepared its five-year plan, which it had been planning for two years, to the Council of Ministers in June 1945. It proudly proclaimed that Egypt was taking its place among “all civilized countries,” which “follow a defined and pre-arranged plan for their reform schemes. Their object is to raise the standard of living of their peoples at large and to provide full employment for the working population by speeding up or slowing down the execution of these schemes according to the exigencies of unemployment.” With this confident expression of Keynesian intention, it proposed LE 115 million in important investments in the infrastructure, public education, public health, utilities and machinery, which it conservatively restricted to LE 46 million for the first five years. The cabinet reduced this budget to LE 26 million, or a mere LE 5 million per year, fearing that the budget surpluses of the war years would evaporate because several of the exceptional taxes had been slated to expire that year.<sup>83</sup>

The transfer of military factories to civilian control occurred only on a small scale, as the British preferred to transfer its useful movable capital (i.e., machinery, parts, raw material) to other places in the Empire, or retain it in the reduced military zone around the Suez Canal after 1947. Prime Minister Sidqi therefore eliminated a LE 1

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<sup>82</sup> NARA RG 59, 883.504/6-1246 “Unemployment in Egypt,” Tuck to State, 12 June 1946.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. Attachments, Report of the Ministry of Social Affairs on Five Year Plan, Abdel-Meguid Badr, 28 June 1945; Note submitted to Council of Ministers on Five-Year Plan, Minister of Finance Makram ‘Ubayd, Sep. 1945.

million fund dedicated to purchasing Army surplus supplies and machinery from the five-year plan mentioned above in March 1946. This fact exemplifies the general difficulty Egypt faced in transforming its inflated fiat money into real fixed capital. Monetary exchange controls on sterling instituted at the beginning of the war including a fixed exchange rate with the US dollar. This meant that Egypt and the colonies, commonwealth states and others in this so-called sterling area whose currencies were pegged to the sterling after Great Britain left the gold standard in 1931 were forced to pool their dollars and other hard currencies for Sterling credit.<sup>84</sup> After six years of severe current account deficits with the rest of the world these sterling credits were not convertible to hard currencies. Britain, by its very bankruptcy, held another form of sovereign control over the Egyptian economy by refusing to allocate goods to Egypt for purchase in sterling, or to release more than a nominal amount of dollars to Egypt after the end of the war.

Because of import restrictions during the war, there was very little reinvestment in new physical machinery in Egypt. After the war, a shortage of machinery from Britain and the Sterling area and a shortage of dollars or other hard currency to buy machinery from the United States threatened Egyptian productivity. In the textile industry, after several years of high output and overtime for workers, the breakdown of machinery was interfering with keeping these workers employed.<sup>85</sup> Vitalis has demonstrated how the business conflict over scarce machinery imports helped delay the development of a hydroelectric and fertilizer plant in Aswan for 10 years after the Second World War.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See NARA RG 84, Egypt 851, Sterling Area Exchange Controls, 23 Oct. 1944 and Gerold Krozewski, "Sterling, the 'Minor' Territories, and the End of Formal Empire, 1939-1958," *The Economic History Review New Series* 46:2 (1993).

<sup>85</sup> See for example, FO 922/372, Fabrique Egyptienne des Textiles KA-BO to Middle East Supply Center, 24 Oct. 1944, a plea for more spare parts and needles from sources outside the sterling area.

<sup>86</sup> Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide*.

The lack of real capital in the form of machines and surplus commodities in the sterling area tended more generally to cause the failure of the British postwar project of neocolonial economic influence in the Middle East based on the emerging concepts of development and modernization aid.<sup>87</sup> At the same time that the United States managed to defeat British control over imports by ending its support for the MESC, it did not have the political support for a similar dollar-aid program to the region until the Point IV program in the early 1950s.

Structural adjustments to the British economy slowly let Egypt out of the vice grip of austerity, but not before a decade of extended controls had marked governmental policies in Egypt permanently. A spike in Egyptian unemployment occurred in the short run because of these continuing trade restrictions following the sharp decline in British demand. However, no deflation occurred. The price level stabilized for several years, as the government kept all major food staples under price controls. Egypt left the sterling area in 1947, gaining control of the dollars it earned from its exports and eventually founding an independent central bank. However, this came at the cost of the devaluation of its sterling credit balances by about 40% versus the value of the Egyptian pound in 1949. Between 1948 and 1949, the British economy had begun to improve and it liberalized the release of credits from the blocked account, for example, allowing Egypt to import 42,000 tons of British textile machinery, compared to less than 5,000 tons during the war.<sup>88</sup> However, the effect of this delayed investment always trailed the demands of the large number of industrial workers trained during the war for improved

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<sup>87</sup> See Kingston, *Britain and the Politics of Modernization*.

<sup>88</sup> El-Mallakh, "The Effects of the Second World War", 283.

hours and wages. This industrial strife helped spread communist influence in the labor movement and caused severe labor protests between 1946 and 1948.

Despite the obvious failure of economic solutions to the end of wartime demand, liberal attitudes about economic intervention and monetary policy lingered on in Egyptian technocratic discourse because of the expectation that Egypt would return to a laissez faire environment much faster than it did.<sup>89</sup> The economic research published in *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, the magazine of the Fuad I Society of Political Economy, Statistics and Legislation, was consistently optimistic that once Egyptian importers were able to purchase British goods with the sterling credit, the increased supply of goods would lead naturally to a deflation of the Egyptian pound, even at the cost of “temporary unemployment.”<sup>90</sup> The fact that government statistics continued to express the cost of living index as a multiple of the 1939 prices as late as the 1952 military coup exposes the liberal technocratic belief that prewar prices would eventually return. This school of social science continued to chalk up unemployment and poverty to overpopulation and underproductivity rather than the progressive destruction of Egyptian capital through the financial and monetary controls examined above.<sup>91</sup>

Indeed, the Middle East Supply Center economists and their Egyptian counterparts had some familiarity with particular Keynesian policies. However, a Keynesian statistical apparatus in Egypt for measuring the total production of the economy and expressing it in terms of a rate of growth over time, in which deflation

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<sup>89</sup> Dasūqī, *Miṣr Fi Al-Ḥarb* examines the persistence of liberal political economy, 311-316.

<sup>90</sup> See Mahmoud Saleh El Falaki, “Postwar Planning of Currency and the Monetary Market in Egypt,” *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, No. 216-217, Jan.-Feb. 1944; Prof. Berger-Voesendorf, “Consistent Reflation in Egypt and the High Costs of Living,” *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, No. 238-239, Mar.-Apr. 194; E. Nassif, “Le Problem des Prix en Egypte,” *L'Egypte Contemporaine*, No. 240, May 1947.

<sup>91</sup> See El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*, for a more detailed description of the development of eugenic social science in Egypt.

would be negative rather than a restoration of equilibrium, scarcely existed. Mahmoud Anis made the first attempt at an analysis of Egyptian GNP in 1950.<sup>92</sup> A new generation of “authoritarian modernist” economists led by Rashid al-Barrawi acknowledged the new footing of Egypt in the world economy after the bankruptcy of Britain, which made some headway towards reconciling the contradictions of Egypt’s illiberal short-term economic control measures with actual state planning to build up industrial investment. However, these economists achieved positions of influence with the government only during the late 1950s.<sup>93</sup>

The 1948 Palestine War in some respects marked a qualitative change in the security state’s treatment of the economy. The minority government of al-Nuqrashi was definitely more draconian than the Wafd had been during the Second World War in interning striking labor and communists under a renewed state of siege. Moreover, as this was the first war in which Egypt fielded an army independent of British control, parliament found it politically feasible to increase the size of the budget much more drastically than during the Second World War. It imposed a progressive income tax in 1949 of up to 70% on incomes greater than LE 50,000 to fund LE 40 million in new military expenditures and expanded social welfare programs.<sup>94</sup> In other regards, the Egyptian government used the security policies of the Second World War era in similar ways. Along with the rise in world cotton prices during the Korean War, the Palestine War stimulus reopened the problem of inflation. The Wafd, in its last term in office between 1950 and 1951, used the state of siege again to increase the mandatory cost of

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<sup>92</sup> Mahmoud Ahmad Anis, “National Income of Egypt,” *L’Egypte Contemporaine*, No. 261-262, Nov.-Dec. 1950, 805.

<sup>93</sup> Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity*, 173-186.

<sup>94</sup> Issawi, *Egypt At Mid-Century*, 235.

living adjustment. After five years of relatively more friendly governments emboldened Egyptian industry again refused to grant these increases, leading to another wave of strikes and protests. After a long negotiation with Ahmad ‘Abbud’s sugar monopoly, ‘Abbud agreed to pay 3,000 striking workers the increase, but only if the government allowed him to sell one third of the company’s output to the public off ration at accordingly inflated prices — effectively neutralizing the policy of keeping prices and wages in check.<sup>95</sup> It is clear that economic management by emergency statute made it easy for ministers to put short-term political gains ahead of long-term objectives through the end of the monarchic period.

## CONCLUSION

Fundamentally, the exploitation and control of labor became a political issue between Egypt and Britain that was difficult to reconcile with other aspects of Britain’s negotiated occupation, with nationalist ideology, and most importantly, with security priorities. Egypt remained trapped in the extremely unfavorable trade and currency exchange regime of the British Empire, the Sterling area. The British wished to obtain the cheapest and most convenient labor for military workshops that they could. The expedient mix of casual and contracted labor, alongside with extensive training for skilled laborers, fit their purposes. Well-connected Egyptian entrepreneurs reaped the benefits of labor and supply contracts but acquiesced to many of the populist Wafdist measures to mitigate the increased demand for labor. The wartime concentration of industrial labor made workers themselves foot soldiers in a growing social movement that increasingly identified with

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<sup>95</sup> FO 371/90231 Stevenson to Morrison, “Report on Social and Labor Affairs in Egypt, January-June 1951,” 10 Oct 1951.

the nationalist movement. However, the very fragmentation of work opportunities between the different British workshops, and their calcification in micro-scale regimes of security helped prevent the worker organization necessary for the long-term success of the labor movement. When the good jobs and wages of the wartime dried up, Egyptian workers could see more clearly the manner in which the British and Egyptian governments had exploited them.

As the British postwar military occupation solidified, the contradictory impulses for political parties of maintaining public security and burnishing nationalist credentials intensified. The most striking example of this contradiction occurred in the last year of nationalist confrontations that led to the Free Officer coup. Although Egyptian governments tried initially to retain employment opportunities in the British workshops for their subjects, this cohabitation ended when the Wafd unilaterally abrogated the 1936 treaty in October 1951 to break a stalemate on the schedule of British military withdrawal. More than 70,000 Egyptian workers remaining in the Suez Canal workshops and assorted contractors left their jobs; most went on strike voluntarily, but there is evidence that the Egyptian police pressured many others to leave. Of the actions the government took to challenge the British position in Suez, including encouraging guerrilla attacks on British troops by police and civilians alike, this labor protest was probably one of the most effective; officers and diplomats scrambled to find replacement workers, considering Cyrenaicans, Cypriots, Jordanians and even Palestinian refugees before disqualifying each category because of the legal and diplomatic difficulties of bringing them into Egypt.<sup>96</sup> The Wafd party government did not fully appreciate the backlash this action would have on its own stability. The Ministry of Social Affairs made

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<sup>96</sup> FO 731/90231 JE 2182, FO to Amman, 15 Nov 1951.

a great display of providing another wave of suddenly jobless workers positions in new factories or assistance in returning to their villages. Likely, many joined the front lines of a discontented nationalist urban crowd responsible for the Cairo Fire of January 26, 1952 that ended the Wafd government and caused a prolonged crisis in the Egyptian state. The Nasser government did not allow the labor movement any more technical independence than the liberal monarchic governments had before, but its staunch nationalism swept away the legacy of British labor exploitation of the Second World War era.



## Chapter VI

### Internees, Draftees and Refugees

#### The State's Redefinition of the Egyptian Subject and Nation

There was an upsurge in nationalist discourse in 1945 as it became clear that the British military had ruined the national economy and that it planned to occupy Egypt for the indefinite future. The minority government's relaxation of censorship at the end of the war allowed newspaper *Al-Akhbar Al-Yawm* to publish the first public account of the February 4, 1942 palace coup, inflaming public opinion about British manipulation of Egyptian politics. Certainly, a growing segment of radical nationalists considered all diplomatic negotiations between the British and Egyptian governments illegitimate, from the promises of the 1936 treaty to the tacit principles behind Egyptian support for the war itself. They proclaimed the first and most important solution to Egypt's multiple social and political problems would be the unilateral withdrawal of the British Army and the end of European economic exploitation. Anwar al-Gindi's 1946 tract, *Get Out of My Country*, published by an Islamist press associated with the Muslim Brotherhood, exemplifies this opinion: "Where are Wilson's Fourteen Points... where is the Atlantic Charter and where are the four freedoms? All of these are avenues of victory in the war

of colonialism, to return Britain in victory once again to the enslavement of peoples and the degradation of nations.”<sup>1</sup>

Liberal intellectuals anticipating or analyzing postwar political outcomes for Egypt usually took negotiations about the diplomatic relationship of Egypt and Britain more seriously. These writers and politicians had few illusions about the power of the British, or their duplicity in the past. They looked, however, to the incremental social and political gains that negotiations — particularly those culminating in legislation — could achieve. The brief 1945 book *Problems of Egypt After the War*, by Court of Cassation lawyer Hassan ‘Akush, for example, focused instead on quickly eliminating all unfair legal institutions and extraterritoriality for foreigners, principally the Mixed Courts, which were already scheduled for closure in 1949. Britain should assent to this, he argued, because the state of siege had already effectively demolished European legal privileges. He reminded readers that all Axis nationals had lost their standing in the Mixed Courts and were subject to sequestration and internment, while civilians of all nationalities were subject to Egyptian military courts.<sup>2</sup> This liberal view proposed that nationalist aims of independence, equality before the law and economic and social development could still be achieved by imposing Egyptian legal jurisdiction over foreign communities rather than expelling any group of foreigners wholesale.

Much historical writing on the disintegration of Egypt’s foreign communities between 1940 and 1960 has reduced its causes to the rise of radical xenophobic Egyptian nationalism against a foreign elite, of the type al-Gindi expressed. The lived reality for non-subject residents in Egypt was as diverse as the political reasons for their ultimate

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<sup>1</sup> Anwar Al-Gindī, *Ukhrujū Min Balādna: Da ‘wa Lil-Jihād Wa Tawjīh Lil-Kufah Wa I’dād Lil-Niḍāl* (Cairo: Dār al-Ṭibā‘a wa al-Nashr al-Islāmiya, 1946), 99.

<sup>2</sup> ‘Akūsh and Al-Fīshāwī, *Mushkilāt Miṣr Ba’d Al-Ḥarb*, 19-21.

departure, however. Egypt had remained a sub-sovereign part of the Ottoman Empire prior to 1914. This meant that residents' means of identifying as foreigner, "local" or Egyptian changed drastically in the decades after the First World War and relied on subjective strategies positioning language, religion and evidence of residency.

Before the consolidation of an Egyptian bureaucracy that carefully administered and tracked passports and residency permits, ex-Ottoman subjects from the Levant and Armenia, many of whom were Jews and Christians, also lived between local- and foreign-oriented cultural zones. There was also a great deal of stratification between the experiences of upper and lower classes. The seemingly seamless integration of foreigners into elite Egyptian life was in fact structured through privileged residential neighborhoods and commercial districts guarded by foreign police. The Italian and Greek communities, as well as Maltese and Cypriot subjects of the British Empire, had social and educational institutions that set them apart from Arabic-speaking Egyptians and maintained their cultural and linguistic distinctiveness, but their working-class majorities had more in common and more day-to-day contact with working-class Egyptians than their elite members.<sup>3</sup> These groups, who had made their home in Egypt for many generations by the 1930s, have been known as the *mutamassirun* ("Egyptianized") communities.

Nationalist historiography has tended to condense or eliminate the significant cultural and economic role of non-Muslim and non-Coptic communities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, while the personal memoirs of *mutamassir émigrés* idealize a "cosmopolitan" liberal past that often simplifies the diplomatic context and political history behind the

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<sup>3</sup> See Hanley, "Foreignness and Localness in Alexandria".

dissolution of specific communities.<sup>4</sup> Egyptian agency in both these narratives appears the driving cause behind the events that symbolize the end of these communities, such as the 1948 Palestine war in the case of Egypt's Jews, and the Suez Canal crisis and nationalizations of 1961 for the Greeks. Projected backwards, the 1937 Montreux Convention, which ended the Capitulations and scheduled the closure of the Mixed Courts in 1949, symbolizes "the beginning of the end" for the foreign communities because of the end of the legal privileges that preserved their wealth and distinctiveness.

I argue this view once again confounds the framework of Egyptian liberal legal sovereignty with the specific events and bureaucratic framework that produced its functional results. It ignores the strategic interests and ideological movements of the European powers in Egypt in the decades leading up to the Second World War. The threat of war was the most important reason Britain agreed to the Montreux convention. The change in the treatment of foreigners that appears on the surface to be purely an Egyptian ideological move can be better understood as a worldwide phenomenon of the hardening of national identities and the state-security-formulated documentation that is familiar to any traveler today. In particular, the aggression of Mussolini's designs on the Eastern Mediterranean and his desire to co-opt the Egyptian Italian community as a vanguard of Italian colonialism in Egypt helped destroy the atmosphere of *laissez-faire* European residency, trade and investment that rested on assumed British hegemony.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Anthony P. Gorman, "Egypt's Forgotten Communists: The Postwar Greek Left," *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 20:1 (2002), 174-195. "Alexandria 1860-1960: The Brief Life of a Cosmopolitan Community," (1997) contains several essays reflecting the émigré perspective.

<sup>5</sup> Robert Ilbert, *Alexandrie 1830-1930: Histoire D'Une Communauté Citadine*, Vol. 2 (Paris: Institut Français D'Archéologie Orientale, 1996), 623. Khaled Fahmy writes: "... in the 1930s and 1940s Alexandria was also touched by Nazism, Fascism, Communism, Zionism and Greek irredentism, which between them ripped the European communities apart and would, most probably, have been sufficient to wound the city's civic life fatally," Khaled Fahmy, "For Cafavy, With Love and Squalor: Some Critical

British imperial security requirements also inverted the logics of European privilege and exception before the war to combat this threat, even at the expense of weakening the privileges of the British community itself.

The emergency laws the Egyptian state applied to enemy nationalities during the war, although they were imposed at the request of the British, set powerful precedents for Egyptian bureaucratic attitudes and nationalist ideology. The Egyptian state obtained its first power over and responsibility for large numbers of displaced and mobile people that were potentially threatening to the state: war refugees, governments in exile and political dissidents. During and after the war, the Egyptian government used both the law and exceptional administrative measures to attempt to exclude or control powerful foreign political and economic concerns. They also sought to limit the expenditure of welfare resources on destitute and “unproductive” groups. Hemmed in by Allied influence and political instability, this regime reflected neither a sovereign move to deport entire groups nor a liberal affirmation of individual foreigners’ rights to remain in Egypt.

#### AXIS SUBJECTS: FOREIGN COMMUNITIES AS FIFTH COLUMN

Enforcing the spacial and juridical boundaries between the British army and Egyptian populace was difficult enough for the Egyptian state. Defining the state’s jurisdiction over and its physical and financial responsibility for Axis expatriates stressed its institutional capacity even further. One result of the Capitulations surviving into the 1930s was that the ability of the Egyptian state to regulate the entry, residency and economic activities of protected foreign nationals remained limited compared to much of

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Notes on the History and Historiography of Modern Alexandria,” in *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, eds. Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (London: Ashgate, 2004), 278.

the rest of the world, even compared to states under more direct colonial control. With the arrival of war, Egyptian administrators experienced a revolutionary change both in their legal powers to categorize and control the enemies of the Allied powers. The Egyptians generally were willing to cooperate with the British in security actions to stop espionage, sabotage and propaganda against its military and political position in Egypt. However, Egyptian politicians had reservations about giving up too much of Egypt's legal sovereignty in questions of civilian residents of Egypt. These politicians were wary that the British were seeking to replace the formal structures of the privileges of the Capitulations with informal British hegemony over the foreign communities. The British Embassy again restrained the British military from direct police actions outside of military camps and related transport zones to preserve the literal strictures of Egyptian sovereignty as both sides interpreted it. At the same time, the Egyptians sought to shift as much of the expenses for the execution of security plans as possible on to the British and conserve the resources of the Egyptian state.

The German presence in Egypt in 1939 was limited to the diplomatic corps and a small number of educated businesspeople and technicians and their families. Many of these were Nazi party members, but there was no extensive social organization or extensive contact with the Egyptians. Military Proclamation 7 mandated the detention of Germans. In the third week of September 1939, the Egyptian authorities rounded up some 60 German men and interviewed them for Nazi susceptibilities, and ended up only detaining 33.<sup>6</sup> Under pressure from the Army, the British tried strenuously to interpret article seven of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty to mean that the Egyptians should turn over

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<sup>6</sup> NARA, RG 59, 711.3, Fish to State, 20 Sep. 1939.

all Germans to British custody, but the Egyptians refused.<sup>7</sup> Rather than simply a case of Prime Minister ‘Ali Mahir “trimming” with the Axis, as British Ambassador Sir Miles Lampson accused him of doing, even the Foreign Office acknowledged that the principal factor holding back the Egyptians from taking stronger measures against resident Germans was the fear of retribution against more than 50 Egyptian detainees “stupidly caught” in Germany, including the Egyptian legation staff.<sup>8</sup> As with many other proposed exchanges, this deal was ultimately unsuccessful, and small numbers of Egyptians and Germans remained interned in the respective enemy countries for the duration of the war.

Compared to the small German expatriate community, the logistics and diplomatic stakes behind the treatment of the Italian community upon Italy’s entrance to the war caused much more significant conflict among Egyptians and with the British. The 1937 census counted 47,708 Italian subjects, of diverse social classes, trades, and lengths of tenure in Egypt. The large Italian presence dated to the reign of the successors of Muhammad Ali Pasha in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, who encouraged Mediterranean trade and business for skilled European crafts like construction, textiles, tanning and metalwork.<sup>9</sup> Many Italians found Egypt a convenient refuge during the wars of the *Risorgimento*. By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, their numbers included a sizable Jewish contingent. Many of these Jews the Italian consulate derisively considered “Passport Italians” — former Ottoman subjects who obtained Italian nationality in the aftermath of the First World War. In the 1920s and 1930s, Egyptian Italians were subject to a rise of Fascist propaganda through the Italian consulate to gain their support for Mussolini’s vision for a pan-Mediterranean

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<sup>7</sup> FO 371/23369, J 3736, DV Kelly, “Egyptian Relations with Germany,” 15 Sep. 1939.

<sup>8</sup> FO 371/23369, J 4075, DV Kelly, “Measures to Counter German Propaganda in Egypt,” 9 Oct. 1939.

<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth H. Shlala, “Mediterranean Migration, Cosmopolitanism, and the Law: A History of the Italian Community of Nineteenth-Century Alexandria Egypt,” (Ph.D., Georgetown University, 2009), 43-50.

Italian colonial empire.<sup>10</sup> The new Fascist groups expanded and established roots in a diverse social milieu that included religious communities, charitable organizations, schools and hospitals. Mussolini's efforts met with some ambivalence, especially from families that had lived in Egypt for generations who were less invested in contemporary Italian culture and some of whom were even not fluent in Italian. But in an age of increasing nationalist sentiment around the world, his vision attracted enthusiasm and met relatively little resistance in Egypt until the Italian Race laws of 1938, which restricted Italian Jews' civil rights and banned them from holding political office.<sup>11</sup>

Much of the growing alienation of Egyptian Jews leading to the community's emigration after the founding of Israel in 1948 has been attributed to Egyptian nationalism and anti-Zionism, but the Italian Race laws played an important part in ending the social connections and worldviews that underpinned the Italian Jewish community in Egypt. Although these laws resulted from Mussolini's desire to forge a closer alliance with Nazi Germany, the Italian consul in Alexandria sought to use them to combat what he bemoaned was the "'colonisation' of the fascio, or to be more exact, its 'Judaisation,'" rather than the Fascist dominance of the Egyptian Italian colony.<sup>12</sup> In response, the Jewish community of Alexandria, led proudly by influential Italian Jews, organized a boycott of Italian goods and services. These protests inspired the creation of two competing anti-Fascist groups by the late 1930s, although the hardening of Egyptian Italian public opinion during the victories of the beginning of the war made it difficult for

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<sup>10</sup> See Muftāḥ Bil'id 'Uthmān Ghawīta, *Al-Nishāṭ Al-Īqālī Fī Miṣr Tijāh Isti'mār Lībiyā, 1882-1943* (Al-Tarābulūs: Al-Jamāhīrīa al-'Arabiya al-Lībīya al-Sha'biya Al-Ishtirākīya Al-'Azmā, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> Anouchka Lazarev, "Italians, Italianity and Fascism," in *Alexandria 1860-1960: The Brief Life of a Cosmopolitan Community*, eds. Robert Ilbert and Ilios Yannakakis (Alexandria: BAFRA Graphics, 1997), 78-79.

<sup>12</sup> Lazarev, "Italians, Italianity and Fascism", 86.



the groups to organize and finance their activities; they ended up as mouthpieces for British propaganda.<sup>13</sup>

The overall Fascist dominance of Italian social life made it difficult for the Egyptians and British to disaggregate “apolitical” Italian institutions from potential fifth column activity at the start of the war. Middle East Forces Commander Gen. Wavell wrote to Lampson on June 12, 1940 to demand the registration of all Italian men, the internment of all members of the Fascist party and men between the ages of 17 and 55, and the formation of an Anglo-Egyptian internment committee with military authorities. The military estimated there to be a total of 12,000 Italians who fell into these categories: 5,800 Fascists plus 6,150 other males of military age, of which 4,500 were in Cairo, 5,000 in Alexandria and the remainder in rural areas or provincial cities.<sup>14</sup> Ali Mahir complied with this request, issuing Proclamation 57 on June 17, which mandated registration of men and women and internment on the schedule requested.<sup>15</sup> Wavell objected to the inclusion of women in the scheme and, as the weeks passed, the speed of its execution, but could not fault the letter of the legislation.<sup>16</sup> However, the top brass were taking no chances. GHQ shortly held a meeting with Russell and Baker, the commandants of the Cairo and Alexandria police forces, and Lieutenant Colonel Maunsell, the head of military intelligence to make a back-up plan “in the event of a non-cooperative or non-existent Egyptian Government.”<sup>17</sup> The minutes provide a comprehensive look at the simplicity with which the British military viewed diplomatic relations between the British Embassy and the Egyptian government. The plan follows

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<sup>13</sup> FO 371/33223, R 1948, Wright to Dixon, 28 Jan. 1942.

<sup>14</sup> WO 201/2409, Wavell to Maher, 12 June 1940.

<sup>15</sup> WO 201/2409, Attachment to Lampson to Wavell, 19 June 1940.

<sup>16</sup> WO 201/2409, Wavell to Lampson 23 June 1940.

<sup>17</sup> WO 201/2409, GHQ BTE Meeting, 24 June 1940.

the traditional “condominium” relationship: a British-planned central internment camp in Geneifa (on the Suez Canal south of Ismailia), with British commandants, Egyptian labor and, notably, Egyptian funding, both for the camps and welfare for women and children of prisoners. (“In the first instance. Repayment to be considered.” is penned in). The report concludes: “When detailed B.T.E. scheme is complete it should be presented to the Egyptian Government and latter pressed to implement it without delay. In the event of there being no Egyptian Government or British Martial Law, it should be put into force by the British authorities at once.”<sup>18</sup> Although it implicitly acknowledged the difference between the Egyptian state of siege and British martial law, the report seems to predict the collapse of the Egyptian government in the short run, before Italian forces had even crossed into Egypt.

The Egyptian government resisted nearly every aspect of this plan, and it won significant concessions. The Egyptians successfully asserted their right to enjoy the sole right of arresting Italian residents of Egypt, and eventually secured British funding for the camps, reversing British intentions for the scheme. The Ministry of Interior surveillance over the Italian community, which it inherited from the British-run European Department in 1937, was more sophisticated than the British military wished to concede. Selim Zaki of the special branch of the Cairo Police produced comprehensive reports in English of Fascist organization activities and Italian public opinion about the war and internment. The reports both justified Egyptian actions and probably sought to aid and appease the British authorities about the administrative ability of Egyptians to maintain control of

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<sup>18</sup> WO 201/2409 GHQ BTE Meeting, 24 June 1940.

Italian civilians.<sup>19</sup> Zaki built up a network of anti-Fascist informants or secret sympathizers over time who collaborated with the Egyptian police in preventing Italian espionage and propaganda.<sup>20</sup>

The next prime minister, Hassan Sabri, opposed the wholesale shipment of Italian internees from Alexandria and Cairo to the Canal Zone, far from their families, and put off the formation of a joint internment committee until July 13. When it finally met as an ‘informal committee’ under the chairmanship of Ministry of Interior Undersecretary Hassan Rifa‘at, the committee recognized the transit camps at Italian schools in the main cities as permanent residences for many internees. More importantly, it acknowledged that “internment camps, their administration, guarding, etc. will rest entirely with the Egyptian Government.”<sup>21</sup> With police resources strained, the British military had to be satisfied with gradual arrests of Fascist party members and other young men at a rate of around 20 to 30 per day.<sup>22</sup> The arrests accelerated in September, and the 4,000-person main internment camp, which had been moved to Fayid on the Great Bitter Lake, approached capacity by the end of the month. This camp had Egyptian commanders and guards, but relied almost entirely for both food and tent canvas on the quartermaster supply from the nearby British military camps.<sup>23</sup>

The extreme concentration of the hard-core Fascist civilians at Fayid camp, side by side with Italian POW camps, fueled the struggle over control of the internment system. It had been the intention of the British military and Colonial Office after the entry

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<sup>19</sup> Present in the Egyptian National Archive are DWQ 0073-005031, Police reports on the Italian Community for June 1940, 0073-005030 for July 1940, 0073-005025 for December 1940 and 0073-005023 for Jan. 1941 to Feb. 1942.

<sup>20</sup> DWQ 0073-005025, Secret report on Italian Activities 425 for 1940, Selim Zaki, 17 Dec. 1940.

<sup>21</sup> WO 201/2409, Meeting minutes, Ministry of Interior, 13 July 1940.

<sup>22</sup> WO 201/2409, Embassy Aide Memoire, 15 Aug 1940.

<sup>23</sup> WO 201/2409, AR Wallis, Quartermaster internal memo 30 Sep. 1940.

of Italy to the war to send any civilian internees and European prisoners of war in Egypt to India, and they began sending requests to prepare the transport facilities to do this in June 1940.<sup>24</sup> Only after the first 6,000 internees were successfully imprisoned did such calls become of practical concern to the British authorities in Egypt. Lampson broached the subject with Sabri on October 8 and, in his words, Sabri said that “as a lawyer he didn’t like this idea of handing these people over to us to go to India. He had thought about it a long time but the idea just did not appeal to his legal mind.”<sup>25</sup> By November, this position had evolved into a firm refusal; according to Lampson, “( ...apart from legality of handing civilians over to us when Egypt is not at war with Italy, their amour propre is involved).”

Slightly later, plans to repatriate 2,000 Italians, or around 700 families, foundered on a dispute over who would pay for the transportation costs. Moreover, Italy would not admit the Italian refugees unless the Egyptian government gave each person LE 20 from the fund of sequestered Italian property to finance their first weeks back in their homeland.<sup>26</sup> The issue reached a stalemate and no large group of Italians was repatriated besides a few ships carrying 1,000 Italian children in 1940.<sup>27</sup> The British army removed Italian prisoners of war taken in Africa, who totaled 200,000 by August 1941 and more than half a million after the Italian surrender in September 1943, through Egypt in waves to Sudan, Kenya, India, South Africa, Australia and even to work camps in the British Isles.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> WO 201/2409, Indian Army to Mideast Rptd. SIMLA, Cipher message, 21 June 1940.

<sup>25</sup> WO 201/2409, Copy Lampson to Halifax 8 Oct 1940.

<sup>26</sup> FO 371/27406, J 464, Lampson to FO, 4 Mar. 1941.

<sup>27</sup> Marta. Petricioli, *Oltre Il Mito: L'Egitto Degli Italiani (1917-1947)* ([Milan, Italy]: B. Mondadori, 2007), 456. FO 371/53234, Charles to Bevin, 21 May 1946.

<sup>28</sup> Moore and Fedorowich, *The British Empire and Its Italian Prisoners of War*, 3.



*Figure 6.1. Prisoner of War and Internment Camps at Fayid, Ismailiya Governorate, 1943. IWM Photo Archive, HU 43293.*

The only alternative to sending the Italian civilians to India or back to Italy was the costly expansion of Fayid and eventually other new camps.<sup>29</sup> Complaints from Wavell about the lack of discipline and organization of visitors to the camp at Fayid, and the overall lack of efficiency of the Egyptian guards, continued to increase. He expressed anxiety that enemy aliens at liberty could acquire information about the nearby canal zone military installations.<sup>30</sup> The official Egyptian and British policy evolved to moving the majority of prisoners to provincial camps, while Fayid, where conditions were acknowledged to be poor, remained the center for the youngest and most politically dangerous men.<sup>31</sup> Dissatisfaction with the state of affairs was the sharpest among the subaltern British liaison staff at Fayid, particularly Colonel C.D. Baker-Carr, chief of the liaison office. The BTE staged a “Court of Inquiry” to officially hear testimony from

<sup>29</sup> WO 201/2409, Lampson to Halifax, 8 Nov. 1940.

<sup>30</sup> WO 201/2409, Wavell to Lampson, 15 Nov. 1940.

<sup>31</sup> WO 201/2409, Embassy meeting, 4 Jan 1941.

these officers about the poor — and potentially medically threatening — conditions under Egyptian administration.<sup>32</sup> In the middle of the inquiry, a riot broke out at Fayid immediately following the return of several internees who had escaped. Italians assaulted the Egyptian guards, some of whom opened fire on them, killing two and wounding 11 inmates.<sup>33</sup> After this event, the Egyptian authorities capitulated and agreed that the British military in charge of the adjoining prisoner of war camps would guard Fayid until it could be disassembled and the prisoners decentralized.<sup>34</sup> However, because of administrative inertia and a lack of funding for such a project, it remained in existence until 1945. The number of civilian internees peaked at around 9,000 in late 1941, and had declined to 6,006 as late as August 1943.<sup>35</sup>

Egyptian-Italian Albino Ceserta's oral history of the Italian internees at Fayid presents its harsh desert living conditions, which the British did little to ameliorate, as a trial that the Italian community eventually overcame through solidarity.<sup>36</sup> (The camp power struggles no doubt subsided after the Anti-Fascist prisoners had been better segregated from the Fascist majority). The camp council ultimately published a mimeographed newsletter and organized orchestras and football teams. Ceserta's history also reflects the Italian view, perhaps in nostalgic retrospect, that they never doubted the sympathy of the Egyptian guards and even the higher officials in the Ministry of Interior that it was only British imperial policy that was compelling the Egyptians to arrest and intern Italians.

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<sup>32</sup> WO 201/2409, Copy "Proceedings of A Court of Inquiry, Internee Camp Geneifa. 6 Jan. 1941.

<sup>33</sup> FO 371/27406, J 495, "Internee Camp, Fayid - Disturbance 3rd February 1941," Col. F.V. Foster, General Officer CIC, BTE, 18 Feb. 1941.

<sup>34</sup> WO 201/2410, Memorandum of Conversation, Hassan Rifaat, Ahmad Sadiq, Napier Clavering, Terence Shone etc. 8 Feb. 1941.

<sup>35</sup> FO 371/27408, Lampson to Foreign Office, 9 Oct. 1941; FO 371/37318

<sup>36</sup> Albino Caserta, "Storia, Politica, Internamento," in *Gli Italiani D'Egitto Nella Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, ed. Franco Greco (Rome: Associazione Nazionale Pro Italiani D'Egitto, 2007).

British requirements, Egyptian bureaucratic and diplomatic needs and humanitarian concerns over the maintenance of destitute Italians all competed and overlapped in determining the Egyptian state's policies towards the Italian community. The Egyptian government used the state of siege to put German, Italian and other Axis property under sequestration at the same time as it imposed trade restrictions of the respective countries. The administration of this property, of which there is no objective total but which Italian estimates (undoubtedly on the high end) after the war valued at approximately LE 200 million and included banks, insurance companies, and industrial concerns in rubber, cigarettes, ice, phosphate fertilizers and automobiles among other sectors, represented yet another inadvertent government intervention into the private sector.<sup>37</sup> The Egyptian state applied measures similar to its broader welfare programs to ensure the security and quiescence of the Egyptian population at large. British financial administrators were worried, when the Egyptian Sequestrator Muhammad Zaki al-Ibrashi began to liquidate the assets of Italian insurance companies in Egypt to reimburse Egyptian civilians for air raid damages, that the Italians would exact penalties on British companies in Italy in return. From the perspective of Foreign Office, the situation was simpler: "The amount of Italian property in Egypt exceeds that of Egyptian property in Italy. Therefore I see no reason why the Egyptians should desist from using Italian assets for compensation to air raid victims."<sup>38</sup>

The British Embassy also had to mediate disputes between the British military and the Egyptian government over the military's use of Italian assets. The British military sought to withhold payment to the sequestrator for Italian land it was occupying and

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<sup>37</sup> Petricioli, *Oltre Il Mito: L'Egitto Degli Italiani (1917-1947)*, 464.

<sup>38</sup> FO 371/27406, McCombe to Tufnell, 1 Jan. 1941.; Foreign Office to Lampson, 17 Jan. 1941.

£27,000 worth of timber it obtained from an Italian company before it was sequestered.<sup>39</sup> The Foreign Office's interpretation hewed closely again to diplomatic conceptions of law and debt: "We wanted the Italians in Egypt interned. Only the Egyptian Government had the legal right to do this, and in order to get them to sanction this we have had to agree to pay for their internment. I cannot see how this can possibly, in equity or otherwise, give us any right to refuse to pay to the Sequestrator debts owing by the British military authorities to Italian nationals, payable to the Sequestrator under Egyptian law."<sup>40</sup> To raise this money, the sequestration administration pursued cash debts to the Italian companies held by members of the public and Allied states, and it held auctions to liquidate property that drew ready buyers, like an auction of 25 cars and motorcycles (mostly Fiats, but also a Ford and Studebaker) advertised in *Ruz al-Yusuf* magazine in mid-1942.<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, by 1943, the Egyptian Government was obliged to use a large amount of the sums under sequestration to provide welfare to the families of interned or unemployed Italians, or those whose businesses had been confiscated. The Swiss Legation, which provided diplomatic representation for the Italian community, reported in March 1943 it had been distributing LE 37,000 per month from the Italian state for this purpose for several years, but that it was running out of resources to do so. The Egyptians had already been supplementing this amount with LE 15,000 from the sequestered assets to be able to pay a monthly support of LE 3.50 per person up to LE 10 for large families, for around 20,000 Italians.<sup>42</sup> By August of that year, the Swiss reported the Italians had

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<sup>39</sup> FO 371/27407, Wilcox to Thompson, 31 March 1941; FO 371/27408, Wilcox to Bateman, 9 July 1941.

<sup>40</sup> FO 371/27408, Note. WA Backett,

<sup>41</sup> *Ruz Al Yusuf*, 25 June 1942, 18.

<sup>42</sup> FO 141/880, Harpham memo. of conversation with Ibrashi, 19 May 1943.



not sent any money at all for destitute Italians for two months and the Egyptians had begun paying the full LE 52,000 per month by liquidating sequestered Italian property.<sup>43</sup> The British generally agreed with the assessment of al-Nahhas that “The Egyptian Government finds itself with the choice of continuing to pay these subsidies out of the Italian goods under sequestration — at the risk of weakening the position of Egypt in the question of [post-war] reparations, — or of treating numerous Italian families devoid of all resources in a fashion that does not conform to humanitarian principles.”<sup>44</sup>

Italian calls for the end to internment and sequestration increased after the Italian armistice with the Allies on September 8, 1943. Renato Prunas, secretary general of the Italian Foreign Ministry, wrote to Harold Caccia, in the Allied Control Commission of Italy, that “the Italians in Egypt, once a prosperous and flourishing colony of 65.000 souls, are now subjected to a spiritual confusion which is the primary cause of many forms of moral degradation, which for humanitarian motives, calls for immediate correction. Italian schools are closed and children are growing up without even receiving an indispensable elementary instruction. Misery and prostitution are widespread.”<sup>45</sup> The British were somewhat ambivalent about easing the burden on Italian families that were not proven Fascist. But because the burden of providing welfare fell so strongly on the Egyptian government, and it was anxious about maintaining its postwar bargaining position with the Italians, al-Ibrashi refused to release sequestered property early. He wrote to the British that most of the Italians coming forward at this point had not been

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<sup>43</sup> FO 141/881, Lampson to FO, 17 Aug. 1943

<sup>44</sup> FO 141/881 Al-Nahhas to Lampson, 31 July 1943.

<sup>45</sup> FO 371/41369, Prunas to Caccia, 4 April 1944.

among the Italian Jews or Anti-Fascists exempted at the beginning of the war and should be considered opportunists who had nothing to lose.<sup>46</sup>

Such negotiations caused a final peace treaty between Egypt and Italy to take until late 1946 to be concluded. The treaty was not ratified and the final sequestrations lifted on Italian companies until April 1948. As a part of the settlement, the Egyptian government received the phosphate company in Quseir as security on the delivery of LE 4.5 million in cash and Italian owned land as reparations, in addition to which the Italians disavowed any of its subjects' claims to the LE 2.1 million that the sequestrator had liquidated (of which most went to support the Italian community but LE 350,000 was paid to Egyptians for air raid damages).<sup>47</sup> Many Italian businesses, and crucially, Italian community organizations, received back fractions of the property they had owned in 1940, leading to some angry allegations that the Italian government had sacrificed the community in Egypt to normalize diplomatic relations.<sup>48</sup> At the same time, employment opportunities for middle- and lower-class Italians dwindled in Italian companies and at Egyptian enterprises that were subject to new restrictions on the number of foreigners they could employ (explained below). Although the Italian community did not disappear, its number declined by nearly 40% to 28,000 in the next census in 1947.

## GREEK REFUGEES, SOLDIERS AND COMMUNISTS

The liberal intent of the Montreux process was meant to make all foreigners equal under Egyptian law, but the exigencies of war forced the Egyptian government to make tough political choices about how to exercise its emergency jurisdiction over particular

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<sup>46</sup> FO 371/41369, Ibrashi to Egyptian Minister of Finance, appended to Lampson to Eden, 14 Mar. 1944.

<sup>47</sup> DWQ 0081-031029, Accord of Restitution between Italy and Egypt, signed September 10, 1946.

<sup>48</sup> Petricioli, *Oltre Il Mito: L'Egitto Degli Italiani (1917-1947)*, 467.

nationalities. Upon the Nazi invasion of the Balkans, a large number of Yugoslav and Greek subjects sought refuge in Egypt, as well as the royal governments of the respective states. Because the Egyptian state had little grounds or practical ability to refuse these refugees, it combined older legal conceptions of the communal responsibility of foreign nationalities with contemporary modes of control and surveillance over them. The Egyptian government sought to secure the commitment of the British and Greek governments to finance the housing and feeding of all Greek refugees. For example, nearly four months of negotiations occurred before the Egyptians accepted 3,000 Greek children, who were billeted in the homes of “rich compatriots.”<sup>49</sup> Egyptians responded to British requests for permission to open Egypt to a further 10,000 Greeks from Turkey, Cyprus and Lebanon with the requirement that the refugees be housed in a military camp and “be passed on to their ultimate destination as soon as possible.” Al-Nahhas’ diplomatic response was usually “I have been swayed by the humanitarian consideration to accede to your request.”<sup>50</sup> When, as the government predicted, refugees tended to overstay the negotiated terms of their domicile, opposition politicians subverted this language to highlight the country’s taxed resources. “It is a very serious matter,” if refugees are taking food from hungry Egyptians, “since we know that humanitarianism is satisfied when the people of a country can eat first and foremost!” angrily proclaimed deputy Muhammad Abdel Rahman Nuşayr, a Liberal Constitutionalist partisan who later joined the Muslim Brotherhood, in parliamentary debate. The Wafd Minister of Justice

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<sup>49</sup> DWQ 0081-0031289, Council of Ministers’ memorandum, 22 Dec. 1941.

<sup>50</sup> DWQ 0081-031289, Lampson to al-Nahhas, 7 May 1942; al-Nahhas to Lampson, 18 May 1942.

Sabri Abu 'Alam went to great lengths to demonstrate that these refugees were kept in military camps separate from the greater population and served with their own supplies.<sup>51</sup>

The arrival of the Greek King George II, the Greek army, and these refugees in Egypt had a strong impact on Egyptian Greeks, who at 69,000 people, were the largest expatriate community in Egypt. Greece had been governed since 1936 by a pro-royalist military dictatorship under General Ioannis Metaxas, who had restored the Greek royal dynasty after a decade of republican rule. Metaxas' death in January 1941 and the withdrawal from Greece forced the army to restore any republican and leftist officers who could escape to serve in a royalist dominated military-in-exile. An intense political rivalry between these factions continued to grow in the military and in civilian life in Egypt.

Unlike the Egyptian Government's reluctance to give authority over Italians as involuntary enemies of the British, it had less justification for resisting British hegemony over the policies of its Greek ally and the Greek community in Egypt. Foremost among its interventions, the Greek and British militaries drafted 7,000 young Egyptian Greeks to fight in the First Greek Brigade at El Alamein and in units in Syria, some of whom had never set foot in Greece. (This resulted in a good deal of resentment towards young British men deemed essential to civilian jobs in Egypt who were exempted from military service.)<sup>52</sup> These drafted soldiers, largely of the middle and working classes, sympathized with the left-wing political orientation of the subaltern officers of mainland and archipelago origin and the military in Egypt became a hotbed of politics. The Greek First

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<sup>51</sup> *Madabit Majlis al-Nuwwab*, 21-22 Feb. 1942, 723.

<sup>52</sup> Angelos Ntalachanis, "The Emigration of Greeks From Egypt During the Early Post-War Years," *Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 35:2 (2009), 36. The Patriarch of Alexandria was reportedly uncooperative with this effort, and 250 conscripts deserted prior to El-Alamein, FO 141/871, "Greek Affairs in the Middle East, June 3, 1942 to March 10, 1943," 29 Mar. 1943, 6.

Brigade of 5,000 troops played a successful role in the Second Battle of El-Alamein, but the Second Brigade on subsequent guard duty in Palestine was in constant tumult for most of 1943. This unit petitioned the government for the purge of its right wing officers and for the formation of a cabinet with leftist representation, contrary to liberal Prime Minister Panayotis Kanellopoulos' plans for a centrist government. The British imposed a type of juridical discipline on the Greek army on several occasions, holding a court of enquiry in March 1943 into the "state of indiscipline" that resulted in the disbanding of the Second Brigade.<sup>53</sup> The agitation culminated in April 1944 in a three-week mutiny of the army and navy in and around Alexandria in support of the EAM (Communist) provisional government set up in Greece after the Italian withdrawal. The Greek Seaman's Union, a newly formed trade union with a strong local presence in Alexandria, supported the mutiny.<sup>54</sup> Uncharacteristically, Rifa'at turned all responsibility over this joint civilian-military strike to the British military forces, allowing them to arrest the Union's local leader, civilian Nikos Karayannis, and withdrawing all Egyptian police from the Alexandria ports so that the British military could storm the three occupied Greek vessels and defeat the mutineers.<sup>55</sup>

After the suppression of the mutiny, as many as 10,000 participants were court martialed, and 49 were handed death sentences that were suspended only after strenuous British protest.<sup>56</sup> The great majority was detained indefinitely in camps in Libya and Eritrea under British control, effectively halving the size of the Greek military, which the

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<sup>53</sup> WO 201/1764, Report of the Court of Inquiry into Indiscipline in the Greek Brigades, 14 April 1943.

<sup>54</sup> Alexander. Kitroeff, "The Greek Seamen's Movement, 1940-1944," *The Journal of the Hellenic Diaspora* 5:1 (1980), 80.

<sup>55</sup> FO 141/954, Rifaat to Col. Jenkins, 6 Apr. 1944

<sup>56</sup> USNARA RG 84, Egypt 711.5 "The Committee of Mothers, Wives, Sisters and Relatives of the Greek Military Men of Egypt confined in Special Concentration Camps of Erytrea and Cyrenaica" to Kirk, 6 Sep. 1945.

monarchy heavily reorganized to secure right-wing leadership. At this point, the Egyptian Ministry of Interior intervened to request that the British distinguish between the officer leadership of the mutiny from mainland Greece from Egyptian Greek draftees and to amnesty and demobilize the latter. “They are the real victims because they were always against all idea of revolution and every breach of discipline,” the report stated. “Because they were against these ideas, the Greeks from Greece detested, insulted and threatened them with death.”<sup>57</sup> This report goes to some lengths to identify the refugee officers as outsiders and an important source of communist ideology threatening Egypt as a way of explaining away the rise of independent Egyptian-Greek communist groups at the time. In the end, the British treated all soldiers involved in the mutinies similarly. A year and a half later, a committee of the parents of 2,000 Egyptian Greek soldiers in internment had to resort to petitioning the British and American Ambassadors for the release of their sons.<sup>58</sup> Upon the return of these men, and the eventual demobilization of the Egyptian Greeks who were deemed loyal enough to stay in the army and who decided to return to Egypt, working class Greeks in particular faced the same difficulties in regaining their old jobs during the wave of post-war unemployment as liberated Italians.<sup>59</sup>

The immediate postwar tensions with the Soviet Union coincided with the Greek Civil war and a rise in radical labor organization in Egypt, fueling the Egyptian security services’ symbolic transformation of the Greek community into a source of Communist conspiracy. Ironically, the nascent Egyptian communist movement had been better

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<sup>57</sup> FO 141/954, “Les Incidents Malheureux es Forces Greques en Egypte,” n/a, in Mukhtar to Tomlyn, 8 May 1944.

<sup>58</sup> Evangelos Spyropoulos, *The Greek Military (1909-1941) and the Greek Mutinies in the Middle East (1941-1944)* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1993), 396. The OSS estimated the detainees at 6,000-10,000; leftist authors have claimed a figure as high as 20,000.

<sup>59</sup> Ntalachanis, “The Emigraiton of Greeks From Egypt During the Early Post-War Years”, 36.

integrated with the activities of the Soviet Union through the Comintern in the 1920s and 1930s before its demise.<sup>60</sup> By the 1940s, the Soviet Union had sworn off direct patronage of Communist groups so as to establish serious diplomatic connections with the increasingly independent Middle Eastern states. The new Communist groups of the 1940s, like Iskra and The Egyptian Movement for National Liberation, grew through local organization and the rising activity of the Egyptian trade unions. These groups were founded by Jewish Egyptians of European origins, Hillel Schwartz and Henri Curiel respectively, and included a large number of Jewish, Greek and British members despite general efforts to include Muslim and Coptic Egyptians. The heterogenous membership of these movements made them vulnerable to outdated accusations of Soviet conspiracy. In the first state maneuver since the start of the Second World War to invoke widespread fear of communist activity, Prime Minister Ismail Sidqi struck out in July 1946 at student, labor and Wafd-led protests of growing social inequality and of the stagnation of his renegotiation of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty. He arrested 200 political activists and banned a number of left-wing papers and the official Wafd daily, *Al-Wafd al-Misri*.

A memorandum from Hassan Rifa‘at of the Interior Ministry to the British Embassy one month prior to these arrests provides an extensive look at the connection between the communist movement in Egypt, Soviet propaganda and even the “infection” of foreign social groups in the bureaucratic mind. Rifa‘at accused the Allied nations of turning a blind eye to — and even spreading — Russian propaganda in the interest of helping war morale. Moreover, “A number of Foreign units came to Egypt, Polish, Yugoslavs and Greeks, carrying with them the microbe of communist propaganda,

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<sup>60</sup> Rami. Ginat, *A History of Egyptian Communism: Jews and Their Compatriots in Quest of Revolution* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2011), 187-201.

disseminating it among Egyptian civilians, which had the effect of increasing the number of theorists anxious to learn more about communism..." Interestingly, he also indicts Levantine Arabs as a source of propaganda that had filtered into an eastern social medium. Rifa'at constructed a conspiracy whereby all communist activity in Egypt is directed by the Soviet legation and in turn "these institutions support the Soviet legation." Of the French, Greeks and Italians, "At a conservative estimate, 30% can be considered as having communist tendencies; the majority of the Greeks consider them[selves] as Soviet subjects."<sup>61</sup>

Public discourse usually followed innuendo rather than outrageous and unprovable statements like this one. In his announcement of the communist arrests, Sidqi maintained (instead) that "It is possible some Greek Communists have a connection to the EAM [the mainland Greek Communist movement opposing the Royalist government]."<sup>62</sup> Sidqi's legislation banning communist activity, which he passed as a royal decree law during the parliamentary recess in 1946, stressed the interdiction of foreign political interference in Egypt as one of its defining characteristics, sentencing a fine and prison to "everyone, who without the government's authorization, establishes, founds, organizes or directs societies, groups or organizations of any kind which have an international character or which have branches abroad." Sidqi informed *La Bourse Egyptienne* it was his opinion that the recent student and labor protests had been coordinated by "foreign communists" to spoil the negotiations for a new treaty.<sup>63</sup> In actuality, many Greeks participated independently from the EAM in the Egyptian

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<sup>61</sup> FO 371/53327, Campbell to Bevin, appx. Hassan Rifaat, "Report on the Communist Movement in Egypt," 21 June 1946.

<sup>62</sup> "New Talks on Egypt's Treaty," *The Telegraph*, 15 Jul. 1946.

<sup>63</sup> "S.E. Ismail Sedky pacha dément tout rapport entre le Wafd et la IIIème Internationale," *La Bourse Egyptienne*, 15 July 1946.



nationalist communist movement in the 1940s, although these points of contact became more limited as the scrutiny of the security forces increased and the culture of the communist movement became Arabized and Egyptianized by the 1950s.<sup>64</sup>

The failure of the Greek mutiny represents the tragic culmination of the third volume of Egyptian Greek author Stratis Tsirkas' epic novel about the Greek leftist movement in exile across the Eastern Mediterranean during the Second World War, *Drifting Cities*. Tsirkas indicts both the British for interfering so strongly to prop up the unpopular royal dynasty, and the Soviet Union, which withdrew support for left-wing activists in the army at a crucial moment to preserve unity among the Allies. But, rightly or wrongly, he saves an important critique for the Greeks in Egypt. In the second book, *Ariagne*, the protagonist Manos Simonidis takes refuge with Ariagne, a Greek Egyptian woman in Cairo, after being wounded in Libya in 1943, where he publishes a left-wing nationalist newspaper. While the character of Manos remains fixated on the cause of bringing about a left-wing democracy in Greece, Tsirkas does include a vision of the insecurity these conflicts brought to the Greeks living long-term in Egypt through the eyes of Ariagne. She worries that Greek social superiority to Egyptians and specifically Manos' political intrigues would alienate the Egyptian authorities from the practical position of the majority of Egyptian Greeks who knew no other home would lead to their ultimate exile:

I can see the crowds bustling on the pier, surrounded by mountains of suitcases and bundles and mattresses. And behind them, the graves of parents, grandparents, small children, left to the mercy of God. Left without an oil lamp, without even a bucket of water to quench their thirsty bones. And all the toil, the festive occasions, the daily worries of a lifetime — fifty, eighty, a hundred years

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<sup>64</sup> See Gorman, "Egypt's Forgotten Communists", for an account of the Greek Section of Egyptian Movement for National Liberation and Democratic Movement for National Liberation, which closed in 1949.

— left behind, even though you may think you’re taking them away with you... Mark my words, once you’ve lived a lifetime in a particular place, in a particular way, it’s over and done with, you can’t start again somewhere else...<sup>65</sup>

This vision is perhaps a projection of a later period — Tsirkas wrote the trilogy in the late 1950s — but the Greek diaspora already had undergone such an evacuation from Western Anatolia after the First World War. The nation state logic that underpinned population transfer in the Greco-Turkish war was infinitely expandable.

#### ALLIED SUBJECTS AND CITIZENS IN MILITARY COURT

The idea that Europeans could be tried by an Egyptian judge, for the first time in around 90 years, for crimes under state of siege jurisdiction was a shocking development to many foreign lawyers and jurists who had made careers in Egypt. As before, the British played an important liaison role in explaining and defending the new legal regime that corresponded to their interpretation of the Montreux convention. Pierre de Witnesse, the French Consul, wrote to the British on September 13, 1939 to elicit support for Egyptian military tribunals for Europeans that would be composed of two Egyptian officers and a Mixed Court judge of the accused’s own nationality instead of an Egyptian judge.

Lampson replied, after consulting with ‘Abd al-Hamid Badawi, head of the State Legal Department, that the Egyptian government was prepared to defend their sovereign right to a purely Egyptian judiciary in all state of siege cases quite vigorously. However, he insinuated that if there were an actual case of “victimization” of a European in military court, they might have a stronger case for intervention.<sup>66</sup> As the Mixed Courts continued to operate as usual, the only way to bring foreigners under the jurisdiction of the military

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<sup>65</sup> Stratēs. Tsirkas, *Drifting Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1974), 272-273.

<sup>66</sup> FO 371/23370, J 4197, Lampson, 17 Oct 1939.

courts was to pass proclamations expanding military jurisdiction for everyone in new crimes. For example, as the original state of siege law and proclamations had failed to mention punishments for espionage, 'Ali Mahir passed Proclamation 23 primarily to ensure that two Italians charged with the crime would appear before the military courts and not a mixed tribunal led by an Italian judge early in the war.<sup>67</sup>

Generally, the British Embassy was willing to accede to Egyptian military trials of Europeans. Most frequently, the military courts sentenced Greek merchants and grocers for security and supply infringements. In March 1944, the issue nonetheless broke out as a British parliamentary imbroglio when metropolitan politicians raised a complaint about a British subject who had been tried in the Egyptian military courts. Lampson had learned in February of Alice Marks, a British subject sentenced to six months imprisonment along with two Egyptian women for running a brothel, when her two sons serving in the Air Force complained to the British HQ in Egypt. He wrote to Nahhas to ask for her release as "an act of grace upon the part of the Egyptian Government".<sup>68</sup> Al-Nahhas refused to grant her a pardon. He argued that her treatment was identical to the Egyptian defendants, and also that current regulations did not allow him to reverse his decision as military governor.<sup>69</sup> As with the prior cases of Egyptian hegemony over the state of siege, the British Embassy had to give up this request for symbolic privilege in order to maintain an Egyptian political order on which they relied so heavily.

Unlike the other affairs this one gained brief political attention in London. Marks' son's complaint also made it to MP Sir John Mellor, who officially asked the Foreign

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<sup>67</sup> FO 371/24633, J1409, Lampson to Halifax, 27 April 1940.

<sup>68</sup> DWQ 0075-050160, Killearn to Nahhas, 11 Feb. 1944.

<sup>69</sup> DWQ 0075-050160, Nahhas to Killearn, 21 Feb. 1944.

Office in Parliament on March 22 why “British subjects (were) being tried otherwise than in accordance with the Treaty of Montreaux.”<sup>70</sup> Killearn found himself explaining and defending the Egyptian state of siege to the Foreign Office, which had mostly ignored the issue of military jurisdiction as long as it produced favorable results. He claimed there were no records of other British subjects tried in Egyptian military court, although he immediately qualified this with a case against the head of the Maltese community in military court for whisky bootlegging, which ended in acquittal. After a basic outline of the system under the constitution and treaty to the Foreign Office, Killearn argued the “Council of Ministers have exercised these powers under Article 6 of the law mainly if not entirely at our request,” to maintain public security and the “safeguarding of British troops,” of which running an unlicensed brothel was an infringement.<sup>71</sup>

There is evidence there had been other British subjects tried in military courts. Killearn’s assertion no other British subjects had been tried in military court may be another case of bureaucratic amnesia, but the British embassy had actually been interested and possibly keeping track of all Egyptian military court cases involving British subjects since 1940, when a severe sentence against a Maltese man for possessing illegal weapons led the Embassy to alert the Alexandria, Port Said and Cairo Consuls to keep an eye on the courts’ activities with an eye to making a complaint.<sup>72</sup> Although there are no firm figures, there were enough foreigners in state of siege detention to warrant Mustafa al-Nahhas to request a full investigation of their treatment by the Ministries of

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<sup>70</sup> FO 371/41389, J 983, Advance notice in FO minute, 18 March 1944.

<sup>71</sup> FO 371/41389, J 1026, Killearn to FO, 22 March 1944. Underline by an FO reader.

<sup>72</sup> FO 371/24634, J 1718, Wright to Were, Wikely, and Heathcote-Smith, 2 July 1940.

Interior and Health at the start of the Wafd government in 1942.<sup>73</sup> Later that year, the British had also clarified the question of the jurisdictional status of a Greek woman, Beatrice Ilyas Haddad, married to a British military officer William Wood, on trial in military court for running a brothel. The British Embassy confirmed to the Egyptian Ministry of Justice that as her husband was serving outside Egypt, she was not eligible for the immunity for families of the British armed forces in Egypt, and her trial went ahead.<sup>74</sup>

Lampson attempted to shift the 1944 controversy from the issue of jurisdiction, which he could not change, to the prison treatment of the convicted British subjects. “The trial of Mrs. Marks by the military tribunal is in no way peculiar,” he noted. “The trouble is that she was convicted and sentenced to imprisonment... the conditions of Mrs. Marks’ imprisonment... have been found to be most unsatisfactory”<sup>75</sup> Even after the Foreign Office had satisfied Mellor in Parliament that the state of siege changes were merely a wartime measure, Killearn pursued the issue of special prison treatment for foreigners as another mostly symbolic demonstration of British power in a realm in which they no longer wielded it. Even after Marks’ term of imprisonment had ended (as had a Maltese pub proprietor’s six-month sentence for infringing alcohol regulations), Killearn continued to cite these cases as evidence that the Egyptians had been obstructing applications for better food and less crowded cells to which the military governor had given its informal consent in 1942. He perhaps did not recommend his cause with a dash of colonial chauvinism: “Your Excellency knows as well as I that British subjects in

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<sup>73</sup> DWQ 0081-030604, Minister of Health to al-Nahhas, 24 Feb. 1942; Minister of Health to al-Nahhas, 8 Mar. 1942; Memo. al-Nahhas, 12 Mar. 1942.

<sup>74</sup> DWQ 0081-030604, Report of the Military Parquet, felony 2951 for 1942, 21 Oct. 1942; British Embassy to Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 27 Nov. 1942.

<sup>75</sup> FO 371/41389, J1026, Killearn to FO, 22 March 1944.

common with other Europeans and many Egyptians have a mode of life and standard of minimum comfort which is, unfortunately, far above that of the lower elements of the Egyptian population.”<sup>76</sup> Despite receiving confidential advice from Minister for Social Affairs Fu’ad Sirag Ad-Din to simply give all foreigners special treatment automatically,<sup>77</sup> Nahhas preferred instead to form a dossier of all the positive comments British and European observers had recently given of the Egyptian Penal system, presumably for retort to Killearn.<sup>78</sup> The Egyptian government did not address the issue until the Wafd left power in October, when new PM Ahmed Maher sent a memo to all military parquets directing them always to inform foreign defendants of their right to apply for special penal treatment.<sup>79</sup> Dissatisfied, Killearn protested to Maher that foreigners should automatically be given special treatment, and in the prevailing spirit of conciliation with the British, Maher conceded this final point.<sup>80</sup>

## THE SECURITIZATION OF RESIDENCY AND NATIONALITY

In one sense, the Montreux convention and war had removed all the impediments that had prevented Britain from exercising its informal hegemony over the foreign communities in Egypt since the 1870s. It also ensnared the British community in the web of a negotiated Egyptian administration. No administrative power was as central to the material and symbolic operation and security of the state as customs and passport

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<sup>76</sup> FO 371/41389, J1910, Killearn to Nahhas, 18 May 1944.

<sup>77</sup> DWQ 0075-050160, Sirag Ad-Din to Nahhas, 12 June 1944.

<sup>78</sup> DWQ 0075-050160, Including W.E. Newton of the British Military Police, Judge P. Modinos and Prosecutor Hughes O. Holmes of the Mixed Courts and pointedly, Killearn’s first cousin former MP Godfrey Locker-Lampson, who wrote to the prison administration, “I am profoundly impressed by the wonderful organisation of the prison which must be one of the finest in the world. My visit here I can never forget.” There is no specific message to Killearn with this information present.

<sup>79</sup> DWQ 0075-050160, Maher to Killearn, 15 Oct. 1944.

<sup>80</sup> DWQ 0075-050160, Killearn to Maher, 18 Nov. 1944; Maher to Killearn 23 Nov. 1944.

control.<sup>81</sup> Unlike the juridical powers over permanent residents of Egypt described above that gradually devolved on the Egyptian state, the sovereign state did not have to justify itself directly for its decisions on whom to admit or exclude from crossing its borders, although diplomatic pressure was a factor in these decisions.

The issue of defining Egyptian nationality, as distinct from Ottoman nationality, had originated before the First World War. Under the then-current 1929 nationality law, the right of nationality was passed by paternal lineage (“jus sanguinis”), not by fact of birth in Egypt. Individuals from families resident since 1848 automatically received Egyptian nationality, along with Ottoman subjects resident before 1914. Conditions for naturalization were 10 years’ tenure in the country, a productive livelihood, good behavior and functional fluency in Arabic. In practice, the administration’s criteria for actually issuing nationality papers were less clear. Affluent Ottoman subjects, in particular Christians and Jews from North Africa, had been able to obtain Italian and French passports in the years after the First World War. Until 1936, the Capitulations had incentivized obtaining European passports, although some in non-Muslim migrant communities from the east, like the Armenians and Levantine Arabs, successfully obtained Egyptian nationality in the interwar period and became documented *mutamassirin*. Even roughly 5,000 Greeks in Alexandria, of a population of roughly 50,000, obtained Egyptian nationality by 1937.<sup>82</sup>

The Egyptian government had assumed the independent power to issue and revoke visas and residency permits for the first time after the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty and

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<sup>81</sup> See John C. Torpey, *The Invention of the Passport: Surveillance, Citizenship, and the State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

<sup>82</sup> Robert Mabro, “Alexandria 1860-1960,” in *Alexandria, Real and Imagined*, eds. Anthony Hirst and Michael Silk (London: Ashgate, 2004), 257.

Montreux convention. At the same time, it endeavored in the convention to grant residents formerly protected under the capitulations who had lived in Egypt for at least five years before 1937 perpetual permission to remain unless imprisoned for more than three months, convicted of subversive political activities or declared indigent. With the intensification of the war, the Egyptian government attempted to strengthen its surveillance over foreigners, with mixed success. Military Proclamation 25 of May 7, 1940 essentially revoked all existing visas and required all foreigners entering or returning to Egypt to obtain new documentation. Although the Egyptian government took pains to demonstrate to the British that its increased vigilance prevented the entry of enemy nationalities, this policy gave Ministry of Interior bureaucrats the license to make procedures more stringent for all nationalities at a time when nationalist sentiment looked with suspicion on the privileges and economic domination of the foreign communities. The American embassy registered complaints as early as 1938 that the passport and visa office were rejecting visa applications from Jews bearing passports “which are likely to be revoked by the governments of which they are nationals.”<sup>83</sup>

The Egyptians had no control over the entry of Allied troops to Egyptian territory, but by the middle of the war, private businesses of allied nations were complaining of the widespread obstruction of the passport offices. “By the strictest regulations, applied nominally for security reasons, the entry of foreigners has been severely limited; even the entry of vitally necessary British non-official personnel has at times only been obtained through diplomatic intervention,” wrote G. C. G. Charvet, the Managing Director of Royal Dutch Shell in Egypt to Killearn in a typical comment.<sup>84</sup> One of the main reasons

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<sup>83</sup> USNARA RG 84, Egypt 811.11, Fish to State, 7 June 1939.

<sup>84</sup> FO 141/917, Charvet to Killearn, 22 Dec. 1943.



for the passport office to refuse long-term work permits was to prevent a foreigner from taking a job that an Egyptian could fill, although before the late '40s this was also an inconsistent policy. As a compromise, the Ministry of Interior sought to get foreign businesses to accept temporary permits for the employees in question to train Egyptian replacements.<sup>85</sup>

Other legislation attempted to better extend surveillance of foreigners from the borders into the interior of the country. Law 49 of 1940 required foreigners to register with the police within 48 hours of their arrival and obtain a special ID pass card. Although foreign communities were counted broadly in the 10-year census, the Ministry of Interior complained of lacking detailed information about the current residence and employment status of every foreigner. In fact, many of the working class foreigners who had not traveled outside Egypt since 1936 did not hold valid visas or residency permits at all. Prior to the Montreux conference, working class Europeans who made it into Egypt were essentially protected from deportation by the Capitulations. Crucially, the new law also held employers liable for registering all their foreign employees with the police. In a complaint common to the hunt for illegal immigrants around the world, the explanatory note to the law proclaimed, "Many foreigners enter Egypt for touristic purposes and then stay to work in trade and industry... is it not strange that we would refuse entry to any working hands who would compete with our nationals?"<sup>86</sup> The Ministry of Interior did not issue detailed regulations for this law until 1946, because so much of the traffic of foreigners was regulated separately under military jurisdiction, which made a comprehensive survey difficult to make.

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<sup>85</sup> Lampson made several examples in a complaint to 'Ali Mahir, FO 371/24633, Lampson to Mahir, 30 May 1940.

<sup>86</sup> *Maḍābit Majlis al-Nuwwab*, 15 May 1940, Appendix 1, 2193.

This new administrative attitude was just one of the various signs of “xenophobia” to which the British Embassy and British Chamber of Commerce directed their interest when first considering the “postwar reconstruction” of the British community in 1943. British businessmen feared the more stringent implementation of the Arabic Language Law of 1942, which required all paperwork with the Egyptian bureaucracy to be conducted in Arabic; the Egyptian government had customarily accepted French and English. The government justified the act by citing the large amount of paperwork that new commercial and labor surveillance and tax laws mandated — and “for the sake of national dignity,” according to al-Nahhas.<sup>87</sup> The British persuaded the Egyptians not to enforce the law on the military and its contractors, although certain offices — such as passports and immigration — were known to require Arabic at their discretion during the war.<sup>88</sup> The Chamber of Commerce consistently complained of the increase in taxes, tariffs and import restrictions that occurred as a result of the war as if they were policies targeting foreigners, simply because foreign capital was more dominant in trade and industry than agriculture. The most important task for the British Embassy was ensuring the livelihood of the average British subject. The prospect of demobilization and reemployment of British residents of Egypt posed similar problems as it did for native Egyptians and the Greek and Italian communities. The embassy worried in particular about the larger number of Maltese and Cypriots who competed with Greeks and Italians as skilled labor, “to maintain themselves and their families in a way that will do credit to their race.”<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> “Speech of the Minister of Social Affairs,” *Al-Ahram*, 3 Aug. 1942; DWQ 0081-058937, memorandum on Law 62 of 1942, 25 July 1942; al-Nahhas to Lampson, 16 Aug. 1942.

<sup>88</sup> DWQ 0081-058937, Killearn to Nahhas, 12 June 1943.

<sup>89</sup> FO 141/904 Post-war Reconstruction Committee Report, Besley, 20 Dec. 1943, 19.

Killearn usually dismissed Egyptian changes to the status of foreigners as “pinpricks,” but the large amount of time the embassy spent defending its subjects’ threatened privileges betrays just how important these types of issues were for the imperial edifice of the British. More than anything, it was the increasingly nationalistic tone of the Egyptian media and opposition parties towards eliminating foreign exploitation of Egyptians during the war crisis, more than any concrete policy, which led to the foreboding of elite foreigners. “We Don’t Own Anything!” roared the headline of a news article on the common theme of the foreign domination of all trades and businesses. “As an example [of this domination], the installation and repair of elevators was a monopoly of the Italians, such that an Egyptian couldn’t import a single one,” read one provocative line, “so that it took the internment of all the Italians for Egyptians to advance in this field.”<sup>90</sup> The negative publicity in the foreign press from the Chamber of Commerce’s 1943 report resulted in several high-profile Egyptians making public appearances to reassure the foreign communities. “Egypt and her government, I say, extends to [foreigners] today as they will tomorrow and after the suppression of the Mixed Courts, the most cordial welcome and will consider them always as brothers partaking our sentiments, our joys and our sufferings,” al-Nahas proclaimed at the celebration of the signing of the Independence of the Judiciary law.<sup>91</sup>

The importance of the surveillance of foreigners and the restriction of their re-entry increased at the end of the war. The unemployment problem, which had been a nationalist trope mainly about educated Egyptian youth before the war, was generalized into a crisis of office work and manual labor with the reduction of war industry. In 1945,

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<sup>90</sup> “We Don’t Own Anything,” *Al-Ithnayn w-al-Dunya*, 10 Nov. 1941.

<sup>91</sup> USNARA RG 84 830.111, Kirk to State, 7 March 1944.

an inter-ministerial committee reassessed the customs regime with an eye to improving tourism while tightening controls over residency permits. The Egyptian state legal department introduced an interpretation of the Montreux convention whereby long-term residents of Axis nationalities, most notably the Italians, had lost any right of protection from deportation or to return after a long absence.<sup>92</sup> Moreover, the Egyptian government appeared to reject the implied notion that Montreux protections for long-term residents would apply any longer after the transition period ended in 1949 and the Mixed Courts closed. Greek, Italian and French efforts to settle establishment treaties with Egypt that would salvage some of the former legal privileges before Montreux were first delayed by postwar peace negotiations and then abandoned altogether.<sup>93</sup> The Minister of Social Affairs began appending paperwork to all businesses' requests for residency permits along the following lines: "with ref. to your application for an extension of the residence permit of . . . . . please send me as soon as possible a list showing the names of all the employees of your company, their nationality, pay nature of work and date of appointment, written in Arabic: this is required to enable us to express an opinion on your request to the Ministry of Interior."<sup>94</sup> The British Embassy gave credence to allegations that the passport office had been infiltrated by members of the Muslim Brotherhood, who were carrying out a long-term xenophobic agenda of quietly obstructing the entry of foreigners to avoid detection.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> DWQ 0081-077801, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, M. Jacquet, Memorandum on the Montreux convention, 13 May 1946.

<sup>93</sup> Floresca Karanasou, "Egyptianisation: The 1947 Company Law and the Foreign Communities in Egypt," (Ph.D., St. Antony's College, Oxford University, 1992), 74-75.

<sup>94</sup> FO 141/1112, Hugh-Jones to Trimmen, appdx. 22 Dec. 1945.

<sup>95</sup> FO 141/1112, British Community: Post War Reconstruction, Tomlyn memorandum, 18 Jan. 1946

These legislative and administrative trends culminated in the controversial Company Law, drafted in 1945 and passed in 1947. The law required that Egyptians own 51% of the shares of new joint stock companies and hold 40% of the directorships, and that all joint stock companies employ Egyptians at a rate of 75% of all salaried employees and 90% of all laborers, who would receive 65% and 80% of all wages respectively. A large new bureaucracy made a considerable effort to investigate and enforce this law at hundreds of companies across Egypt, but its task was hindered by the ambiguity of the law's meaning. Just who counted as "Egyptian"? The Companies Department, tasked with enforcing the law, held different people to different standards: employees with non-Arab or Muslim sounding names were required to produce nationality certificates, or in the case of Copts, certification from the patriarchate.<sup>96</sup> For Italian and Greek office clerks and working class Jewish Egyptians with no passports or sufficient residency paperwork, this presented a major threat to the livelihoods of individuals and to the social and economic networks that underpinned their communities. The Company Law marked a transition, ten years after Montreux, to the first parliamentary (i.e., not emergency) legislation regulating foreigners that was expressly not liberal. Nationalist ideology fueled and justified this change, but this form of demographic control contains the logic of ten years of security-oriented management of labor and residency.

## CONCLUSION

The end of the Mixed Courts in 1949 did not accelerate the end of the foreign community in Egypt, as some diplomats had worried. If anything, the merger of the courts system,

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<sup>96</sup> Karanasou, "Egyptianisation: The 1947 Company Law and the Foreign Communities in Egypt", 103

along with the implementation of a new Civil Code drafted by ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Sanhuri and secularization of the personal status courts, was an advance for liberal legality in Egypt.<sup>97</sup> Robert Tignor details the British business community’s adaptation to the new “equitable” rules by the late 40s and 50s, and their eager desire for the British Government to make concessions on the control of the Suez Canal to avoid further enflaming Egyptian opinion.<sup>98</sup>

In another sense, emergency internments and increasingly illiberal immigration and foreign residency policies became characteristic of the experience of foreign and *mutamassir* communities because they became routine. The context of the war enabled this process, in which the severity of the threat to the state justified the severity of its security measures. The Egyptian bureaucracy became more adept and comfortable with interning civilians and sequestering their assets, such as during the 1948 Palestine War and 1956 Suez Canal crisis. If this cycle followed the letter of liberal legality, or what was constitutionally acceptable in its defense, it did not reflect the spirit of liberalism. Even a liberal regime centered on surveillance of the individual, under conditions of constitutionally defined crisis, can come to treat communities who either pose a general danger to the security of the state or do not meet the criteria for its protection with a form of collective punishment. That this treatment was mostly unplanned makes it no less constitutive of the experience of these communities and the resulting social transformation of the Egyptian public.

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<sup>97</sup> Guy Bechor, *The Sanhuri Code, and the Emergence of Modern Arab Civil Law (1932 to 1949)* (Leiden: Brill, 2007).

<sup>98</sup> Robert L. Tignor, “Decolonization and Business: The Case of Egypt,” *The Journal of Modern History* 59:3 (1987), 488-489.

While there is good evidence that Egyptian administrators used their new powers to further a nationalist agenda to marginalize non-Muslim, non-Arabic speaking communities, this analysis has tried to highlight the specific conjuncture of events that made these administrative choices possible. As much as nationalist public opinion censured the ongoing economic domination of foreign elites, the various crises of war highlighted the ways Egyptian government worried non-elite foreigners and undocumented *mutamassirin* could threaten the liberal regime that the Egyptian and foreign upper classes dominated. In assuming the burden of managing Egypt's economy, the government became more intolerant of these groups staking a claim on state resources, whether subsidized goods or access to the employment market. In the case of war refugees, and internees, this meant segregating them from the civilian life and forcing the community of co-nationals (or their patrons, like the British in the case of the Greeks) to foot the bill for their maintenance. The more confidently the Egyptian bureaucracy assured itself and its British and American diplomatic representatives that there was no way communism could garner support among good Muslim Egyptians, the more plausible it was to view — and legally categorize — *mutamassir* leftists as not Egyptian. Collectively, these were an important stage in the Egypt's postcolonial transition to an étatist mode of state management, in which the state sought to discredit all alternatives to the nation-state's program for taxation, subsidies, trade and labor regulations.

## Conclusion

The redefinition of an epistemology of society and the repertory of government techniques, rather than any definite or permanent solutions, characterizes the importance of the Second World War in the development of the Egyptian state. Impending military defeat and food scarcity prompted political actors to seek solutions that could reach far beyond the strictures of their ideologies or class interests. The tactical governance of administrators amounted to more than the short-term horizon on which many of these administrators focused. Through the state of siege, Egyptian politicians, intellectuals and the British diplomatic establishment together sought to preserve the liberal nature of the Egyptian state and political economy throughout the war, although that nature was substantially transformed. They did this not merely because these actors wished to defend their property and the property of their clients, or because of the strength of constitutional and liberal welfare discourse, or by the dictate of the British. Poulantzas proposes a description of the state that can encompass the dynamic complexity of these events: it is “not purely and simply a relationship, or the condensation of a relationship; it is the *specific material condensation* of a relationship of forces among classes and class fractions.”<sup>1</sup> This perspective allows an analysis of expanded executive powers under the state of emergency not just as a code of laws, but rather as a complete and integrated material institution extending from the military governor through his military justices,

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<sup>1</sup> Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism*, 129. (His emphasis).



state prosecutors, the increased police officers and police-like administrators of the Ministries of Interior, Supply and Social Affairs to the farmers, bread bakers and workers in British workshops whose livelihoods hinged on the opportunities and possible punishments the system structured. This institution, itself the product of a range of possibilities before the war, structured the range of political possibilities during and after the war.

The durability and success of the state of siege as a legacy of war governance in public discourse in Egypt was possible through a constant interchange between its material-institutional and ideological aspects. The major advances in the sophistication of the laws and bureaucracy to regularize a system of government intervention in the 1940s were inseparable from the narrative of Egypt's progression towards sovereign self-government and the maintenance of its own security through its participation in the war. The construction of the positive legal forms of the emergency occurred in tandem with the steady, if sometimes inconsistent, manipulation of public consensus. The narrative of Egyptian-British diplomatic cooperation to win the war as the reason for legal exception and *étatisme* broke down after 1945 when it became clear to the Egyptian public that this supposedly epoch-ending war did not mean British withdrawal. By the late 1940s, however, these techniques had been firmly welded to state nationalist practices and goals. The way Egyptian politicians and bureaucrats crafted the state of siege depended on current conditions and ideology, but they inevitably deployed it as a bolster to state sovereignty parallel to liberal institutions in crises in which colonial power, international military or economic threats, or domestic unrest threatened the state's control or image.

More fundamentally than any single economic or political project, therefore, the legal framework born with the state of siege continued after the war and the 1952 Free Officer coup. Indeed, it has continued until the present day in Egypt. It is now well established, although not universally accepted in the nationalist narrative of a postcolonial “1952 Revolution,” that the new regime initially did very little to change the basic form of the government and its policies.<sup>2</sup> The bureaucratic record of the Prime Minister’s role as Military Governor, which began in 1939, continues directly into the 1950s. Mahmoud al-Nuqrashi’s leadership of the Sa‘adist party facilitated his revival of the state of siege as prime minister during the 1948 war in Palestine. The Wafd party brought the Palestine War state of siege to an end in 1950. However, the short-lived governments that came after the January 26, 1952 Cairo Fire imposed another state of siege that lasted through the Free Officer coup in July of that year until the promulgation of the Republican Constitution in 1956.<sup>3</sup>

The institutions of the state of siege therefore bridged a gap of three years during the constitutional interregnum between the end of the monarchy in 1953 and the first republican constitution passed by referendum in 1956. In part because the Free Officers closed parliament and ruled by executive decree in all fields of government during this period, the concept of the state of siege itself (rather than merely protest over a single issue such as censorship or civil internment) for the first time became a topic of controversy in many newspapers and magazines.<sup>4</sup> However, a good deal of this

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<sup>2</sup> Gordon, *Nasser’s Blessed Movement*; Kirk J. Beattie, *Egypt During the Nasser Years: Ideology, Politics, and Civil Society* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1994).

<sup>3</sup> DWQ 0081-030604, Council of Ministers files contain decisions appointing military officers as justices in military courts as late as March 13, 1954, signed by Muhammad Naguib in his capacity as military governor.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 83.

controversy centered on a series of short-lived exceptional show trials that were technically not a part of the institutions of the state of siege. These included the *Mahkamat al-Ghadr* (Court of Treason) in late 1952, periodic trials of communists, the *Mahkamat al-Thawra* (Court of the Revolution), which tried former ministers of the old regime in 1953, and the *Mahakim al-Sha'b* (People's Courts) in 1954-1955, which tried the Muslim Brotherhood after its assassination attempt on 'Abd al-Nasir.<sup>5</sup> Ultimately, the 1958 Emergency Law brought these explicitly political courts to an end and restored the French style of state of siege by moving the military governor's powers to the president. The law introduced a new tier of institutionalized permanent state security courts under his power that, like the military courts of the Second World War, the constitution sanctioned completely and operated with the cooperation of the judiciary, even though the balance of power rested more and more with the military members of the court. The 1958 law is now extinct, but this form of emergency, given its flexible relationship to Egyptian constitutions, is alive in state practice to this day. While these courts have not had the transparency or liberal due process of civilian courts, they both preserve the functional liberalism of the legal system on issues not threatening to the state and regularize the action of the security apparatus.

The chaotic conjuncture of wartime events demonstrates that a state of emergency does not unavoidably or inevitably dismantle liberal practices or wholly invalidate the social utility of rule of law, although it is corrosive to its spirit. Scholars of 20<sup>th</sup> century Egyptian history have sought to explain the endurance of political and cultural pluralism in the face of years of authoritarian colonial, monarchic and later military and republican styles of government. Tamir Moustafa and Nathan Brown both emphasize the important

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<sup>5</sup> Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 78-81.

role the judiciary and legal profession have played since the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in structuring this pluralism. An independent judiciary, they both argue, has helped sublimate the political tensions originating with authoritarian governments, particularly when it has come to the disposition of private property and the development of the economy. In the brief period in which Gamal ‘ Abd al-Nasir attempted to exchange the civil/security parallel justice system in the 1960s for a new form of “socialist” legality, there was an immediate political backlash from the Egyptian bourgeoisie and capital flight from the country.<sup>6</sup> This opposition hastened the right-wing *infitah* under President Sadat in the 1970s, who enshrined the state’s commitment to protecting private property in a new supreme constitutional court in 1979, which provided a frequent forum for political opposition to the National Democratic Party regime as well.<sup>7</sup> These reforms and the tense condition of war that prevailed for most of the 1970s also allowed the quiet resurrection of security and military courts with the consent and cooperation of the independent judiciary itself, as in the 1940s.<sup>8</sup>

What role did the British play in directly precipitating the state of siege and the elaboration of institutions around it? Chatterjee and Cooper both argue that postcolonial forms of governance bear a genealogical relationship to colonial forms, but evolve significantly because of the utility and cultural context of policies during the events of decolonization. Because of the extreme strain on the British Treasury, the British influence on Egyptian policy was the result of Britain’s monetary and logistical exigency rather than design. The British and Allied military forces, by the diplomatic arrangements

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<sup>6</sup> Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 88-93.

<sup>7</sup> Tamir Moustafa, *The Struggle for Constitutional Power: Law, Politics, and Economic Development in Egypt* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) provides a lengthy analysis of the Supreme Constitutional Court.

<sup>8</sup> Brown, *The Rule of Law in the Arab World*, 95.

that allowed them to occupy Egypt and subsequently by their presence alone, stimulated the Egyptian government to spread and intensify the various security measures that the state of siege merely proposed. The need to distinguish and separate the Egyptian population from the battle front, lines of transit, military camps and supply depots, resulted in the Egyptian state enforcing a highly militarized division of space without yet having its own large military. Under these conditions, the shared immediate concern of defending Egypt from real military threats and the disciplinary structures of Egyptian employment in British workshops, the Egyptian public tolerated the hundreds of thousands of soldiers, clerks and engineers to a degree that allowed the Allied military to function smoothly.

Compared to the integration of this new spacial framework with the existing criminal code, the significance of which was concealed behind the dramatic war events it sought to manage, the coercive apparatus of the expanded security state appeared far more active in transforming the shape and behavior of economic activity. However, this analysis has stressed the various limits on viewing *étatist*, security-centered wartime policies as “Keynesian.” British economic experts at the Middle East Supply Center and minister for state E. M. H. Lloyd and R. F. Khan had been colleagues of Keynes, whose views had gained ascendancy in the prior decade at the British Treasury.<sup>9</sup> These experts made a variety of monetary policy suggestions to limit inflation in Egypt, but none that came at the risk of destabilizing the pound sterling. As Goldberg points out, truly Keynesian management of the Egyptian economy was impossible before the creation of an Egyptian central bank, which the crisis over Egypt’s frozen Sterling account

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<sup>9</sup> Vitalis and Heydemann, “War, Keynesianism, and Colonialism”, 102, 137 note 7.

precipitated in 1951.<sup>10</sup> The MESC's true task was not introducing Keynesianism to Egypt or any other country in the region, but rather to command the logistics that would guarantee the success of the war effort. All other effects were incidental, which is one of the most important reasons why the British project to turn the MESC into a tool for British economic influence after the war failed so rapidly.<sup>11</sup> Because both the value of goods and the level of employment were so dependent on erratic British imports and military demand respectively, the Egyptian state devised a set of defensive economic mechanisms that private business interests easily manipulated after the end of the war.

The pent-up pressure to return Egyptian agriculture to cotton among politically powerful landlords in 1945 obliged the Ministry of Supply to assume a permanent and fundamental role in organizing and subsidizing wheat flour and bread consumption in Egypt. Domestic food production fell so precipitously after the war that the state was forced not only to maintain minimum acreage requirements from growers on wheat at a relatively low fixed price, it also maintained a monopoly on rice exports, which it bartered with other states to import the wheat to fill the gap between production and consumption.<sup>12</sup> With cotton as one of the remaining large-scale uncontrolled commercial crops, cheating on legal requirements to grow minimum amounts of food crops became endemic.<sup>13</sup>

Continuing these price controls after the war for political reasons had precisely an anti-Keynesian effect, depressing prices and wages. It also marked the permanent change in consumption habits that eliminated much of the remaining subsistence agriculture

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<sup>10</sup> Goldberg, *Trade, Reputation, and Child Labor*, 92.

<sup>11</sup> Kingston, *Britain and the Politics of Modernization*.

<sup>12</sup> DWQ 0081-026617 Council of Ministers Reports on Rice Crop Planning, 1946 (25 Sep. 1946) and 1948 (2 Oct. 1948).

<sup>13</sup> NARA 874.03 "Food Supply Report - Egypt," Williams and Diamond to State, 26 Dec. 1951.

among poorer owners and tenants. The resulting breakdown in the *'izba* sharecropping system caused an increase in landless agricultural wage laborers at a time that wages were stagnating and rural subsidy distribution was far less equitable than in the cities. This encouraged urban migration, compounding the very problem of feeding the urban lumpenproletariat that sparked the original cycle of government intervention.

In a period of renaissance in several industrial sectors providing import-substitution goods to the domestic market, owners made such substantial profits that organized labor was able to obtain better wages and benefits with less animosity than in the 1920s and '30s, although in reality these wages struggled to keep pace with prices. In the process, the Wafd government set up the infrastructure for its paternalistic and corporatist control of unions while allowing the military courts to be relatively lenient with striking workers. The wave of post-war unemployment and underemployment severely tested this settlement, as communist organization and the infusion of radical nationalist and student protest divided the trade union movement. At the same time, the Egyptian state was unable to defy the demands of Egyptian industrialists under renewed global competition and totally unprepared to implement a Keynesian plan to prop up spending on mass infrastructure construction or state-run industry building. However, the corporatist mode of trade unionism became a cornerstone of populist politics in the 1950s, as the Free Officers repeatedly sided with workers on wages and benefits in arbitration at the expense of (often foreign) owners — and ultimately the independence of the unions themselves.

Moreover, the major economic reforms the state implemented after 1952, like land ownership limits and redistribution, the nationalization of big utilities, and the

limited spread of model villages and collectivization, were all projects that had been tried or deeply debated for the entire duration of the 1940s.<sup>14</sup> Although the 1952 reforms limited landownership to 100 feddans per person, which dismantled the political dominance of the wealthiest class of pashas, the Egyptian state in the 1950s cultivated the rural middle class through an expansion of the cooperatives system, and the urban middle class with guaranteed university education. Well-connected upper-middle class families with members educated in the technocratic sciences became the new leadership of the state. Robert Springborg's biography of Sayyid Mare'i, a wealthy landowner and agronomist who survived a stint in parliament before 1952 to become the director of land reform under 'Abd al-Nasir and then a key ally of al-Sadat and speaker of parliament in the 1970s illustrates just how these families transformed financial capital into political capital in the 1960s, and subsequently back into financial capital after the 1970s liberalization, while remaining dominant throughout.<sup>15</sup>

This analysis repositions the role of nationalist ideology in the transformation of Egypt's foreign communities in the late colonial era to reemphasize the priorities and functions of state security. Joel Beinin argues expatriate and Jewish Egyptian "neo-lachrymose" narratives have portrayed the state's discriminatory economic treatment of these communities as a punishment specifically designed to drive them out of the country, or at best, satisfy the populist feelings of nationalists seeking to improve job and investment opportunities for Muslim and Coptic Egyptians in the uncertain postwar

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<sup>14</sup> El-Shakry, *The Great Social Laboratory*; Meijer, *The Quest for Modernity*; Vitalis, *When Capitalists Collide*.

<sup>15</sup> Robert Springborg, *Family, Power, and Politics in Egypt: Sayed Bey Marei--His Clan, Clients, and Cohorts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), 244.



economy.<sup>16</sup> This work has shown that the conjuncture of war events posed real, not artificially manufactured, dilemmas over the legal status of different foreign communities, their property and the legitimacy of their claims on the Egyptian state for protection. Ironically, British war aims accelerated their loss of formerly default legal privileges and also propelled the Egyptian state's administration of enemy and displaced populations. Once again, these policies did not herald the wholesale abandonment of formally liberal legal attitudes towards the residence and property of foreigners. However, they did construct a bureaucratic network that assigned foreigners — particularly from the lower classes — to increasingly more tenuous claims on membership in the Egyptian nation defined by closer surveillance and more comprehensive welfare services than ever before.

The legal and bureaucratic innovations of the Second World War set precedents that the neoliberal security state after 1970 has reflected better than the experiments of the 'Abd al-Nasir era. The way the Allied powers defined the freedom they fought for in the war did not mean supporting democracy for Egypt and other African and Asian states, but rather promoting a global liberalism in which Egypt maintained an active military and economic security partnership with capitalist European states and the United States. Although the United States withheld its support for Egypt's claim for independence in the United Nations in 1947, it provided material support and a global endorsement for the Free Officer regime and its anti-Imperialist policies culminating in the Suez Crisis.<sup>17</sup> This partnership struggled during 'Abd al-Nasir's short-lived switch to Soviet military support after 1956, but food aid from the United States remained an important factor throughout

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<sup>16</sup> Joel Beinin, *The Dispersion of Egyptian Jewry: Culture, Politics, and the Formation of a Modern Diaspora* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 14-19.

<sup>17</sup> Gordon, *Nasser's Blessed Movement*, 167-168; 113-116.

the 1960s and 1970s, allowing Egypt to maintain subsidized bread through a period of high world wheat prices.<sup>18</sup> With the victory of the right wing in Egypt after 'Abd al-Nasir's death, Egypt not only rejoined a Cold War strategic bloc, but also a shared global narrative in which Western imperialism became sublimated to more familiar tropes of progress and security.

This brings me back to the dissertation's third and final theme. The Second World War's trajectory in Egyptian nationalist historical narratives mirrors Egypt's return to liberalism and Western clienthood. Egyptian Tourism Bureau head Mukhtar al-Sabrawi Pasha announced the government was launching a project to make El-Alamein battlefield into a tourist site in February 1951. Al-Sabrawi told local press a recent visit a bureau delegation made to the Waterloo battlefield in Belgium had inspired the idea. The plan included a modern hotel resort on the still undeveloped Western Desert Mediterranean coastline, better transportation options and a military museum near the Commonwealth, German and Italian war cemeteries.<sup>19</sup> The plan was a logical if ambivalent product of a Wafdist tourism administration. The British victory at El Alamein in October and November 1942 was an event that the Wafd party could celebrate as one of the successes of its prior term in government. Any plans for a celebration of British military victory were shelved during the ensuing ten-month nationalist crisis against the British Suez Canal garrison and the Free Officers' coup d'état that brought 34-year-old Lt. Colonel Gamal Abdel Nasser to power in 1952. The Egyptian government eventually built and opened a museum on December 16, 1965, as a small complement to the military cemeteries that had recently been completed nearby. A low-ranking general officiated at

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<sup>18</sup> Beattie, *Egypt*, 195-200.

<sup>19</sup> NARA RG 59 874.02/2-1651 Quincy Roberts, American Consul, Alexandria to State.

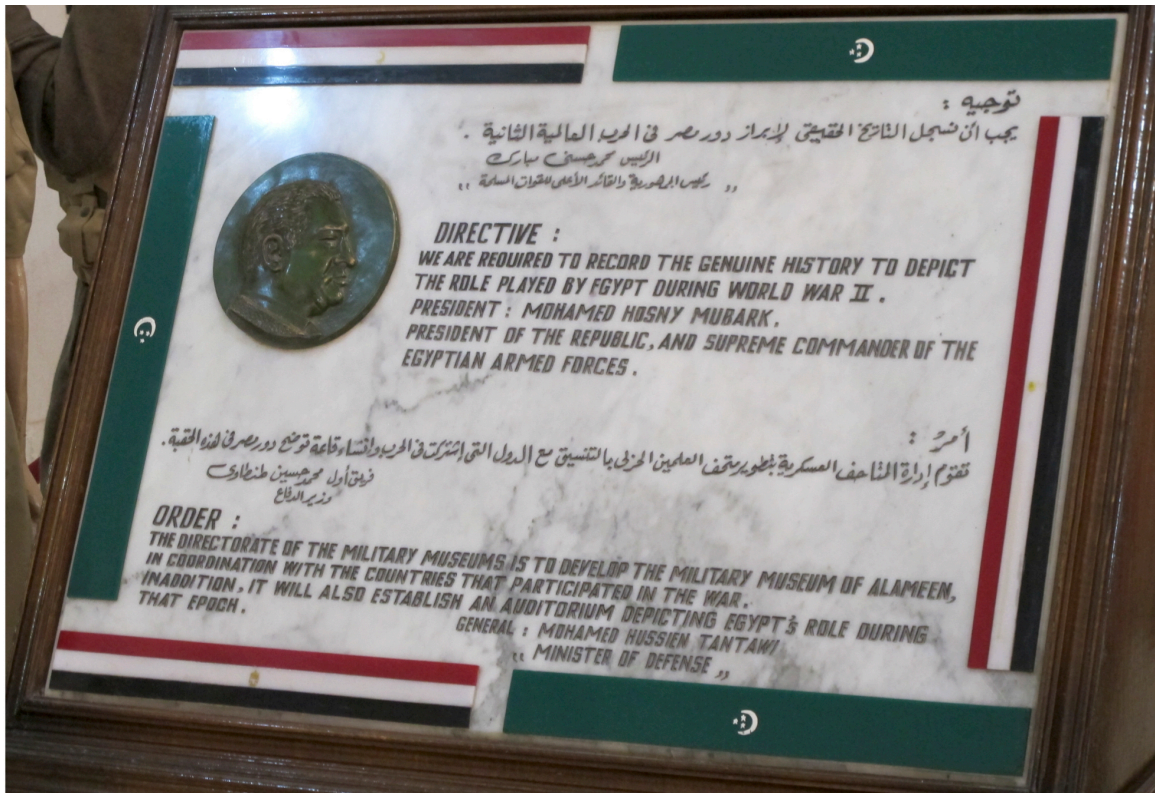


Figure C.1. The dedicatory plaque for the Egyptian room of the El-Alamein Military Museum, renovated in 1992. My translation: "It is necessary to establish genuine history by distinguishing the role of Egypt in the Second World War." Note the side-by-side monarchic (colonial) and republican (postcolonial) flags of Egypt framing the plaque.

a dedication ceremony that *Al-Ahram* newspaper did not even cover; it focused instead on the Rhodesian crisis, broken ties with Britain and the aggravation of the Egyptian-Saudi proxy civil war in Yemen.<sup>20</sup>

It was only after the museum's renovation in 1992 for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the battle of El Alamein that it received positive Egyptian press coverage. The work was part of the Mubarak regime's early-1990s building program of military museums funded and designed by North Korea, which included the 1973 War Panorama in Heliopolis and the renovation of the immense Egyptian Military Museum at Muhammad Ali Pasha's residence in the Citadel. These propaganda palaces were tools for the regime at a time of

<sup>20</sup> This date appears on the El-Alamein Museum dedication plaque. There was no coverage in *Al-Ahram*, 15-20 Dec. 1965. The notice comes from the English-language news report, "General Fawzy Opens Military Museum," *The Egyptian Gazette*, 17 Dec. 1965; See also, Robert McNamara, *Britain, Nasser and the Balance of Power in the Middle East, 1952-1967: From the Egyptian Revolution to the Six-Day War* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 219.

economic stagnation to both promote Mubarak's own role as the head of the victorious Air Force in the 1973 war, but also to epitomize Egypt's triumphant return to the Arab League and international community through its participation in the Gulf War coalition that included staging Egyptian troops to be the first to enter and "liberate" Kuwait from the aggressor Iraq. In ceremonies opening El-Alamein Museum with German, Italian and British representatives, Minister of Defense Muhammad al-Tantawi (subsequently head of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces junta ruling Egypt between February 2011 and June 2012) emphasized the new "Egyptian" room. This room, equal in size to those dedicated to the other nationalities, displayed uniforms, arms, and most importantly new documents "revealing for the first time the true extent of Egypt's role in World War II."<sup>21</sup> The room proudly displays images of King Faruq as "Egypt's Commander in Chief," fond letters of support between Egyptian politicians and British military heroes, and North Korean paintings of the few skirmishes in which the Egyptian army and police took an active role. Changing geopolitical conditions have erased the stigma of colonialism and made the event and site of El Alamein, as Pierre Nora has written, once again "open to the full range of its possible significations" in contemporary Egyptian nationalism.<sup>22</sup>

Since the Camp David peace accords, and the end of the Cold War more generally, United States, Europe and Egypt have shared a new global victory narrative — which contains leitmotifs from the Second World War narrative — of a "war on terrorism." Given the less specific nature of this threat and wide-open parameters of time and place of its setting, the security state today has a more stable foundation in official

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<sup>21</sup> "The Battle of El-Alamein in a Historical Document," *Al-Ahram*, 24 Oct. 1992.

<sup>22</sup> Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (1989), 24.

ideology. Despite the endurance of this ideology in Egypt today, a counterhegemonic discourse denouncing emergency law as a fundamental inversion of liberal legality, which was non-existent during the Second World War and only nascent at the end of the last pluralistic parliament in 1953, now presents a constant, sophisticated and heterogenous threat to its legitimacy. Put more simply, regimes of emergency law can be effective and even sophisticated tools for states in limited periods of time or territories. But there is no permanent victory for such regimes.

## **Appendix**

### **Egyptian Military Parquet Misdemeanor Reports to the Military Governor**

The supplementary statistics provided here are drawn from a series of roughly 225 reports from the office of the military court parquet (prosecutor) to the prime minister in his role as military governor. They report 4,606 cases involving 8,812 defendants on court dates from February 5, 1941 through December 3, 1942. Each report typically summarizes the activities of a single day from a single military court, although some combined different dates and locations. The reports read as ledgers, with the following information for each case: the date tried, location, case number, names of the defendants, criminal charges, the fine and/or prison time sentenced, notes on the charge or penalty. At the end of each line, there is a typed notation from the military governor's office (i.e. a department of the prime minister's office) if the military governor decided to cancel the case. I have drawn the available data from two unique files at the Egyptian National Archives: 0081-030432, which covers 70 court dates from February 5, 1941 through March 23, 1942; and 0081-030436, which covers 72 dates from July 18, 1942 to December 4, 1942 (and some extra files from the Alexandria court between January and March 1942 that I have grouped with the earlier cases). The activity of the military courts before 1941 was minimal, and the bureaucracy for reporting to the military governor had not yet been formalized. As the military courts' activity expanded further in 1943 and afterwards, these ledger reports became merely case number indices for (now absent) case files, and they no longer contain any useful information about the cases.

I argue these two extant groups of data shows important trends from two periods of similar duration before and after the consolidation of Wafd administration in the bureaucracy. These include the overall growth of military court activities, the increase in the severity of punishments, and the increased intervention of Mustafa al-Nahhas as military governor. While I believe the information is significant, there are gaps and irregularities in the available data both in its temporal and geographical distribution. The charts below do not represent a claim to a comprehensive accounting of the military court activity from these dates and places. I'm only seeking to be transparent about the distribution of the material I found.

The eight “types of crime” I have categorized in Figure 2.2 and here correspond more fully to the following charges.

Theft: stealing (Allied or Egyptian) army goods; possession of army goods.

Agriculture: hoarding government restricted grains; transporting or trading in such grains; cutting trees without a permit or fishing without a permit in military areas; failing to report crop yields.

Black Market: misusing or not using a ration card; refusing to sell rationed goods; seller's misuse of ration information ledgers; hoarding goods; selling for more than the fixed prices; selling goods without a license; not keeping proper shop hours.

Weapons: possessing an unlicensed weapon; possessing unlicensed ammunition.

Meat and Alcohol: selling either without a license; selling meat on “meatless” days of the week.

Bread: selling bread with the incorrect weight or flour mixture; selling ground flour with the incorrect mixture of wheat, barley, rice, etc.

Trespassing: trespassing in a military zone, without a pass.

Parole: usually, failing to report to the local police office. Parole (*al-murāqiba*, surveillance) could be assigned without a prior prison sentence.

Other: insulting or striking a police officer or government official; running a brothel; bribery; escaping from prison on a military charge; hiding such an escaped prisoner; hoarding banknotes or precious metal; inciting a strike or striking from industrial work; foreigners' failure to register with the Ministry of Interior; illegal construction near a military area.



**Military Court Defendants by Month and Administrative District, Feb. 1941-Mar. 1942.**

Governorate/ Mudiriya	Feb.-Oct. 1941	Nov. 1941	Dec. 1941	Jan. 1942	Feb.-Mar. 1942	TOTAL
Alexandria	0	0	0	67	140	207
Aswan	0	0	0	0	20	20
Asyut	0	18	184	216	36	454
Al-Buhayra	0	0	3	137	41	181
Bani Suwayf	50	0	33	0	0	83
Canal	102	94	7	77	21	301
Al-Daqhaliya	0	2	0	27	99	128
Dumyat	0	1	0	0	18	19
Al-Fayyum	2	0	2	1	0	5
Al-Gharbiya	0	4	0	82	133	219
Girga	0	1	18	75	0	94
Al-Giza	0	1	0	48	39	88
Al-Manufiya	0	3	44	55	51	153
Al-Minya	0	0	56	20	180	256
Cairo	6	13	33	309	196	557
Al-Qalyubiya	0	0	0	16	1	17
Qena	0	1	50	15	149	215
Al-Sharqiya	1	0	5	151	400	557
Suez	0	3	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	161	141	435	1296	1524	3557

Source: DWQ 0081-030432 and 0081-030436.

**Military Court Defendants by Month and Administrative District, July 1941-Dec. 1942**

Governorate/ Mudiriya	July-Aug. 1942	Sep. 1942	Oct. 1942	Nov.-Dec. 1942	TOTAL
Alexandria	104	97	253	347	801
Aswan	0	0	18	0	18
Asyut	0	23	61	104	188
Al-Buhayra	0	0	83	74	157
Bani Suwayf	0	108	136	155	399
Canal	14	49	46	0	109
Al-Daqhaliya	2	0	48	266	316
Dumyat	0	0	0	27	27
Al-Fayyum	3	0	0	300	303
Al-Gharbiya	0	149	216	146	511
Girga	0	28	21	145	194
Al-Giza	0	0	119	61	180
Al-Manufiya	0	45	95	287	427
Al-Minya	0	0	43	136	179
Cairo	0	131	350	428	909
Al-Qalyubiya	0	0	0	54	54
Qena	0	0	0	187	187
Al-Sharqiya	0	17	116	99	232
Suez	0	59	0	5	64
TOTAL	123	706	1605	2821	5255

Source: DWQ 0081-030436.

### Military Court Defendants by Type of Crime and Administrative District, Feb. 1941-Mar. 1942

Governorate/Mudiriya	Theft	Agriculture	Black Market	Weapons	Meat and Alcohol	Bread	Trespassing	Parole	Other	TOTAL
Alexandria	205	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	207
Aswan	0	5	10	3	0	1	0	1	0	20
Asyut	8	0	198	209	17	0	8	8	6	454
Al-Buhayra	22	2	101	18	14	0	13	2	9	181
Bani Suwayf	1	0	27	45	1	0	0	8	1	83
Canal	102	0	145	10	0	4	6	1	33	301
Al-Daqhaliya	6	15	42	34	15	5	4	6	1	128
Dumyat	0	0	2	1	0	4	10	1	1	19
Al-Fayyum	0	0	3	2	0	0	0	0	0	5
Al-Gharbiya	10	15	132	27	14	2	5	7	7	219
Girga	0	24	39	13	14	0	1	1	2	94
Al-Giza	36	0	20	19	3	2	8	0	0	88
Al-Manufiya	2	44	72	22	5	0	4	3	1	153
Al-Minya	1	10	122	89	21	1	4	7	1	256
Cairo	80	0	325	12	35	12	66	0	27	557
Al-Qalyubiya	4	0	3	3	1	0	1	4	1	17
Qena	17	38	44	51	27	0	7	25	6	215
Al-Sharqiya	271	7	123	11	10	1	120	6	8	557
Suez	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	3
TOTAL	765	160	1411	569	177	32	258	80	105	3557

Source: DWQ 0081-030432 and 0081-030436.

### Military Court Defendants by Type of Crime and Administrative District, July 1941-Dec. 1942

Governorate/Mudiriya	Theft	Agriculture	Black Market	Weapons	Meat and Alcohol	Bread	Trespassing	Parole	Other	TOTAL
Alexandria	507	18	141	15	77	12	4	17	10	801
Aswan	0	6	9	0	2	1	0	0	0	18
Asyut	0	59	77	16	14	6	0	0	16	188
Al-Buhayra	7	32	78	8	18	2	2	0	10	157
Bani Suwayf	0	42	291	23	39	1	0	2	1	399
Canal	109	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	109
Al-Daqhaliya	6	51	188	14	34	8	3	2	10	316
Dumyat	1	0	13	1	0	1	0	0	11	27
Al-Fayyum	1	143	125	11	13	5	0	2	3	303
Al-Gharbiya	13	95	282	26	54	8	7	10	16	511
Girga	0	79	73	15	17	2	1	3	4	194
Al-Giza	48	37	40	25	9	2	7	7	5	180
Al-Manufiya	6	183	150	30	32	5	7	9	5	427
Al-Minya	1	51	105	5	11	4	0	0	2	179
Cairo	176	3	441	20	109	104	7	5	44	909
Al-Qalyubiya	0	1	49	1	3	0	0	0	0	54
Qena	10	81	58	4	15	14	3	1	1	187
Al-Sharqiya	110	44	43	10	13	0	2	7	3	232
Suez	55	3	4	0	1	0	0	0	1	64
TOTAL	1050	928	2167	224	461	175	43	65	142	5255

Source: DWQ 0081-0304

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